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1. Personal Information

Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms ☐

Surname:

First Name:

Address:

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I am seriously interested in meeting someone through Dateline.

Marital Status: Single ☐ Divorced ☐
Widowed ☐ Separated ☐

Age: Height:

Occupation:

Religion:

Build: Slight ☐ Medium ☐ Large ☐

Attractiveness: Very attractive ☐ Attractive ☐ Average ☐

2. Education

Private / Public ☐ Grammar ☐
Comprehensive ☐ Sec. Modern ☐

O Levels / GCSE's ☐ A levels ☐
Further Education ☐
University / Professional Equivalent ☐
Technical Qualification ☐

3. Your Personality

(tick which traits closely describe you)

☐ Affectionate ☐ Fashionable
☐ Serious ☐ Practical
☐ Considerate ☐ Conventional
☐ Shy ☐ Reliable
☐ Romantic ☐ Adventurous

4. Your Attitudes

(tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank)

☐ Do you involve yourself with community activities?
☐ Are you looking for one special relationship?
☐ Does your work make it difficult to meet new people?
☐ Do you want to extend your social life as well as finding a special relationship?
☐ Do you devote a lot of time to your social life?

5. Your Interests

(sections 5. and 6. Please tick for a like, cross for dislike or leave blank for no preference.)

☐ Wining/Dining ☐ Jazz/Folk music
☐ Pubs ☐ Classical music
☐ Sports/Keep fit ☐ Theatre/Arts
☐ Politics/History ☐ Watching TV
☐ Reading ☐ Smoking
☐ Travelling ☐ Astrology
☐ Science/Tech ☐ Children
☐ Cinema ☐ Homemaking
☐ Pets/Animals ☐ Gardening
☐ Pop music ☐ Countryside

6. Details of your ideal partner

Minimum age: Maximum age:

Height: min. max. Don't mind ☐

Marital status:

Single ☐ Divorced ☐
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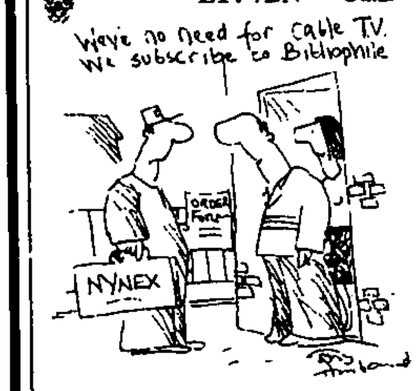

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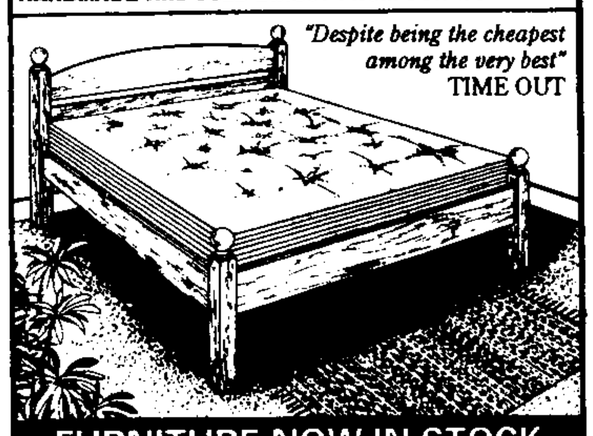

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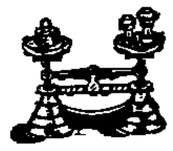
+

a measure of



(balance)

+

a suspicion of

(orange)

+

with lashings of

(Islay)

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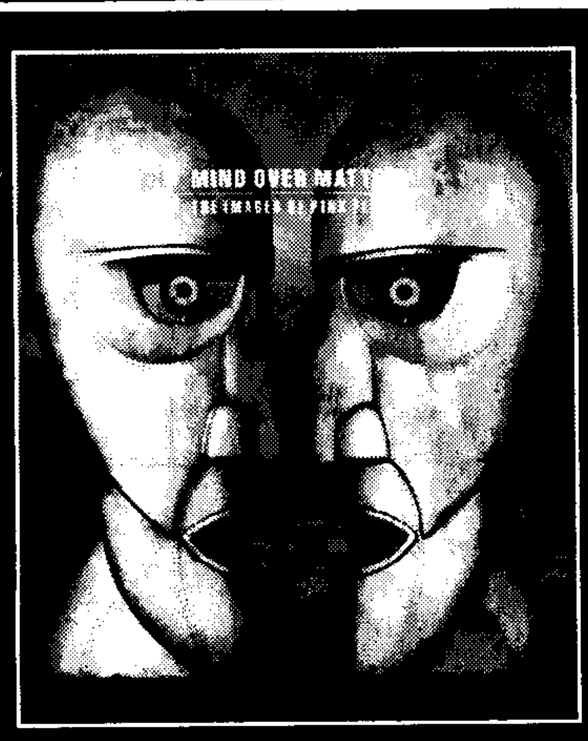

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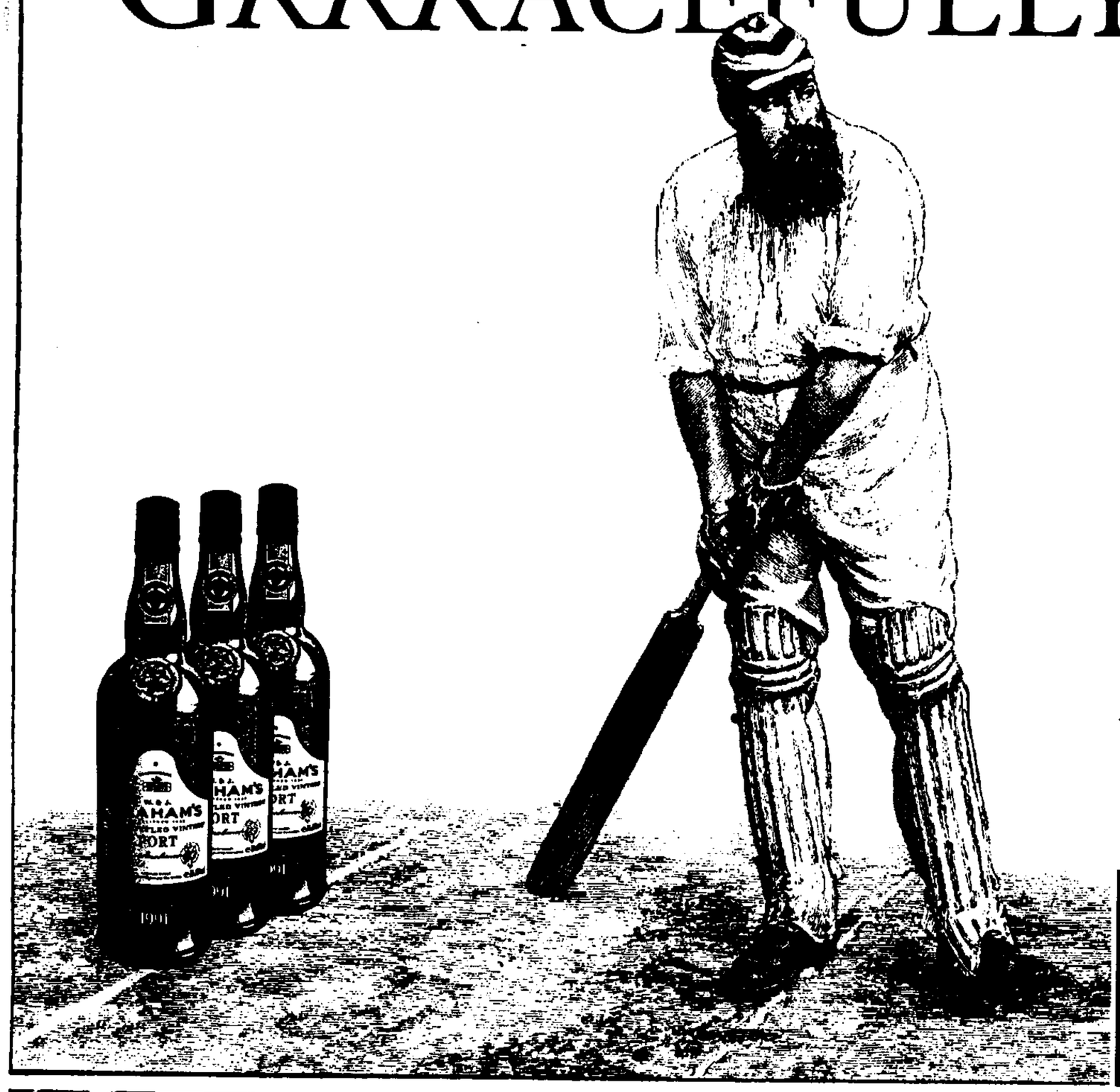

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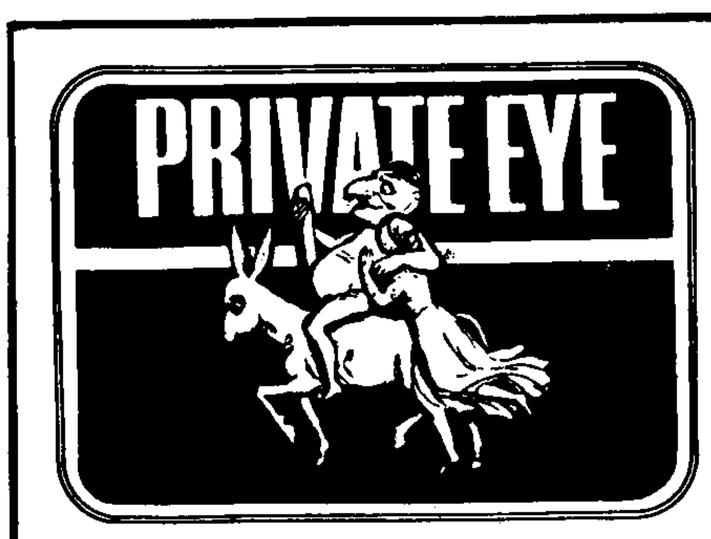

COLOUR SECTION

WHO was the mysterious source of the front page story in the *Financial Times* on 26 September which suggested the government was moving closer to the euro and monetary union and set off the government's first "disaster week"?

The piece led to a leaping of shares and hearts in the stock exchange where the euro is widely loved. But the Blair-loving Murdoch press hates the euro and set up a coordinated campaign to prove the *FT* story wrong. The speculators' hopes (and profits) were dashed when the *Times* the following Saturday reported on its front page that Gordon Brown "rules out single currency for lifetime of this parliament".

The *FT* story was written by Robert Peston, an ambitious young reporter always an the lookout for a scoop. He has since claimed all sorts of anonymous sources to put the hacks off the scent.

Norman Tebbit named Peston's source as treasury competitions minister Lord Simon, who denied it ferociously. A better guess might have been Simon's fellow treasury minister, the paymaster general Geoffrey Robinson. Robinson, Blair's genial Tuscan holiday host, is hell-bent for Europe, the euro, the single currency and all that goes with it. He is said to have been "extremely cautious" with Peston, but delighted with the result.

The "fullest account yet of what has been going on" was modestly announced in the *New Statesman* of 24 October, which savaged the Murdoch press and the Eurosceptics. If the *Times* headline were true, opined the *NS* leader, "we would now have a strategic political disaster on our hands". Curiously the long analysis which followed, by editor Ian Hargreaves and Steve Richards, political correspondent, passed very quickly over the *FT* story, without any speculation as to the source.

Perhaps the Euro-fanatics at the *New Statesman* should keep closer in touch with their proprietor and paymaster, the paymaster general, Geoffrey Robinson. (For a guide on how Mr Robinson became rich, see *Eye* 907).

THE Camelot fat cats' search for the whistleblower who dared reveal the full extent of their handouts to themselves a few days before the figures were published have been boosted by the court of appeal.

The judges upheld the order on *Marketing Week* to hand over the documents which led to its scoop about the fat cats' cream.

Marketing Week cited section 10 of the contempt of court act which bars a court from ordering anyone to disclose journalists' sources "unless the disclosure is necessary in the interests of justice". In the recently-decided Goodwin case, the British courts concluded that it was, somehow, in the interests of justice for employers to be able to root out whistleblowers and sack them. This view was overturned by the European court of human rights, which found for the journalist who refused to reveal his source.

After the Goodwin case, whistleblowers felt more comfortable. Now the law has veered back again. Messrs Justice Schiemann (a judge best known for stopping a civil case against the murderer of 16-year-old Lynn Siddons — fortunately for the interests of justice he was overruled by the court of appeal and the murderer was eventually convicted); Thorpe (a well-known divorce barrister in his day); and Mummery (a former Treasury counsel) have declared that the Camelot fat cats must get their documents. "Clearly," said Schiemann, "there is a risk that an employee who has proved untrustworthy, may be untrustworthy in a different respect and reveal the name of, say, a public figure who has won a huge lottery prize." The commercial interests of the employer had once again miraculously become the same as the interests of justice. The documents were handed over.

WILL Britain use its presidency of the European Union to promote Robin Cook's exciting new "ethical" foreign policy? The *Eye* has obtained a secret letter sent last month by Cook's private secretary, Dominick Chilcott, to his opposite number at 10 Downing Street, John Holmes, which sheds an interesting light on the question.

"The foreign secretary believes we need a better grip on the human-rights related activities of the commission and the European parliament," Chilcott writes. "We should aim to get more ministerial control of commission activity and to seek to channel EP [European Parliament] activity along more supportive lines."

Supportive, eh? Allow Chilcott to explain: "The EP's reports and recommendations tend to be unfocused and often driven by the narrow interests of individual MEPs. They can be damaging because they are assumed by the outside world to reflect the views of the EU as a whole." Thus a resolution in Strasbourg condemning Pakistan "may disappear without trace in Europe but generate real anger in Islamabad". And we don't want to go round angering foreign governments, do we?

Apparently not. Take the example of Turkey, whose appalling human-rights record has often been deplored by MEPs. "The EP's consistently negative position on Turkey has made it almost impossible for the EU to pursue a coherent policy — despite strong support in the council. The US are pressing us to find ways to release funding for Turkey: but this is impossible without EP approval. We risk getting into similar difficulties over EU aid to Israel."

How, then, can those tiresome MEPs be persuaded to stop whingeing about human rights? On behalf of Robin Cook, Chilcott suggests inviting some of the more prominent members of the European parliament — such as "new" Labour's Pauline Green "whose presence should be helpful" — for a private chat. "We have considered the risk that the MEPs would use the occasion to advertise the EP's human rights activities rather than contribute sensibly. But we believe they would welcome the opportunity to discuss their concerns with foreign ministers, and would be keen to make a success of such an occasion." Besides, EU member states "would remain free to dissociate themselves from any future waywardness by the EP."

So now we know. The next time MEPs get all hot under the collar about, say, the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, pay no attention: they're just being wayward again.

ELTON JOHN has caught the mood of the nation with his Princess Di tribute *Candle in the Wind* and its accompanying video, which begins by focusing on a lone mourner outside Kensington Palace, lost in thought.

Alas! The chap in question is, er, a press photographer — one David Rose of the *Independent* — who was actually looking round for a suitable shot for his paper's front page.

- ***Christine Hamilton, Live and Uncut*** 11
- ***The Case of the Fuggin' Emeralds*** 22
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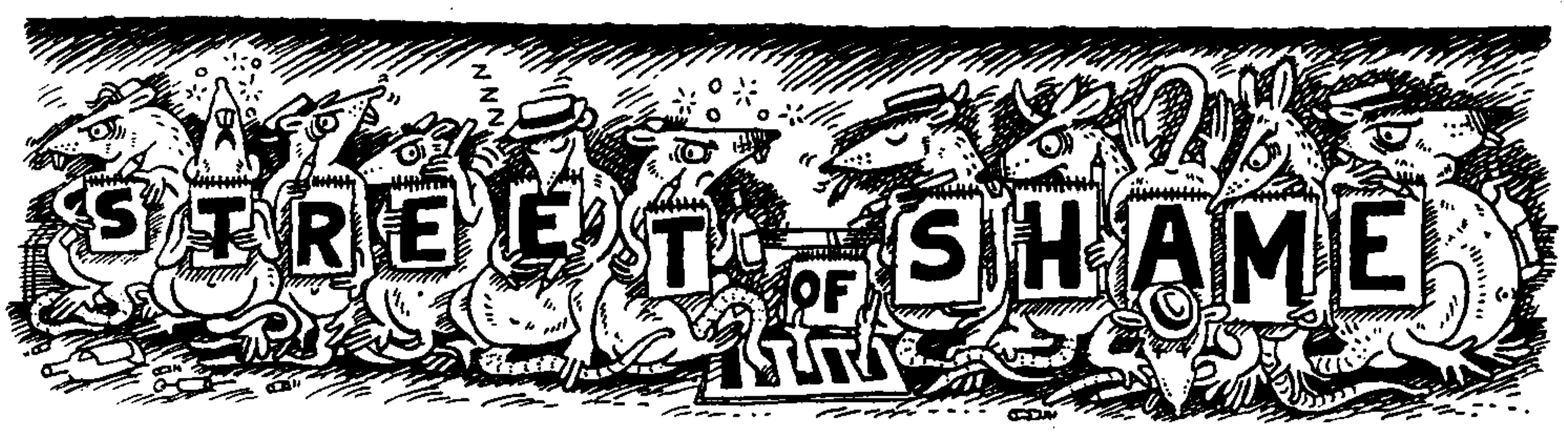
- ***Branson's pisspoor trains*** 12
- ***Fergie's Golden Hello!*** 7
- ***HP Special: New Labour, same old stories*** 8
- ***Prince Michael in the City*** 28



UNWATCHED and unnoticed, last week *L!VETV* pulled off a journalistic first: broadcasting the first ever hard-core footage of an MP fornicating.

The *Mirror*-owned channel screened the secretly shot video, organized by the *Sunday Mirror*, which revealed naked Tory MP Piers Merchant and his 18-year-old playmate Anna Cox in the throes of passion, with full sound effects.

The pair were seen heaving and thrashing under a duvet, with the blonde on top, followed by a mouth-watering sequence in which the young lady appeared to be giving the Tory MP for Beckenham oral relief.

The *Sunday Mirror* and *L!VETV* are both owned by Mirror Group. But lest it be thought this was some tawdry, downmarket porno show, distinguished editor Andrew Marr of the high-minded *Independent* (prop: Mirror Group) was interviewed justifying this invasion of privacy under the new code of conduct.

Distressingly, the gullible Marr thought he was talking about the original press coverage, and naturally had no idea that *L!VETV* would cut his soundbites into graphic scenes of carnal frenzy.

SHOCK! Horror! The *Sun* has discovered a "deadly pistol which avoids the government's ban on handguns" — the Ruger Old Army revolver, which is apparently doing a brisk trade among "firearms fanatics" who can't use their old pistols any more.

On 14 October the paper carried an inventive "exclusive" by Nick Parker, accompanied by a feature in which one Laura Collins ("ex-Army sergeant, now a *Sun* writer") tried out the "deadly pistol" at a gun-club. Her account was even more inventive:

"My target was blown to smithereens... thousands of pieces of melon flesh splattered around the range." An exhaustive search of gun-clubs has failed to locate any which would be reckless enough to let people fire at melons, and *Sun* executives refuse to say where la Collins carried out this fruit-splattering exercise. If she wasn't using an authorised range then she was breaking the law, in which case the police would be most interested in talking to her. Or has she simply watched *The Day of the Jackal* once too often?

"Years ago, in the Army, I used guns because I was paid to. But when I left in 1990, I was never interested enough in the subject to shoot as a hobby." How odd, then, that Collins's signature appears in the register of the Mayfair Gun Club, where she was seen shooting — with full-bore rifles, rather than Ruger revolvers — as recently as 30 September.

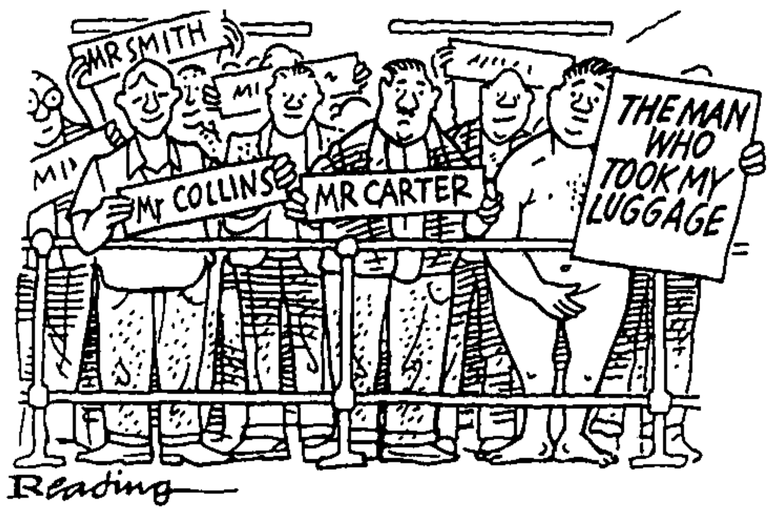
ANDREW NEILL has now added ageism to his collection of prejudices — a curious development in a man who has always looked 20 years older than his real age.

Included in the latest bloodbath of sackings at the *European* (which also eliminated most of the newsdesk) was veteran foreign correspondent Ronald Payne. True to his spineless style, Neill deputed the executions to his sidekicks, Sue Douglas and Peter Millar. The hapless Millar spoke up in defence of his drinking pal Payne, only to be slapped down by Neill with the order "I don't want that old man in the office! Get rid of him!"

The sackings and subsequent salary savings have allowed Neill to install his lackeys in absurdly overpaid jobs. Jonathan Miller — now universally known as "Widmerpool" — is trousering £75,000 as business editor, a job which takes about three days a week.

Neill's ultimate aim is to reinvent himself as a Sunday newspaper editor by taking over the *Independent on Sunday* (with money from the Barclay twins) and then flooding it with former *Sunday Times* hacks already hired for the *European* — adding the newly-acquired *Sunday Business* (now "edited" by Jeff Randall, another old *Sunday Times* crony) and the *European* as supplements.

One can understand Neill's desire to return to Sunday journalism and avenge himself on Rupert Murdoch, who forced him out of the *Sunset Times*. But are the Barclay brothers really willing to spend squillions merely for the sake of Brillo Pad's *amour propre*?



DAVID BARCLAY, least reticent half of the reclusive and litigious twins who own the *European* and *Scotsman*, made a rare appearance in the *Guardian* and *Scotsman* to argue for tougher self-regulation of the press.

He attacked the "lowering of standards" and announced that "the abuse of press power is unacceptable". He went on to savage the foreign press, in particular German "gossip magazines".

Could he have forgotten the opprobrium heaped on his editor-in-chief Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill when, two days after Diana died, the *Scotsman* printed a photograph showing her crashed car with the bodies still apparently inside — reproduced from the, er, German "gossip" magazine *Bild*.

***SUNDAY Telegraph* editor Dominic Lawson is a man who knows what he wants.**

A year ago, to a wave of hostile publicity, he fired long-serving columnist Kenneth Rose who had penned the genteel but pisspoor Albany musings for nearly 1,000 years.

More recently, Lawson delivered a ferocious bollocking to gingery hack Mark Inglefield, responsible for the Mandrake meanderings. "Your column," thundered Lawson, "should be more like... like the Albany column!"

POOR *Daily Mail* diarist Nigel Pratt Dumpster: the former Greatest Living Englishman has made no fewer than two court appearances in a month.

First, a high court judge described him as "incompetent" and fined him £25,000 for breaching a legal undertaking not to repeat libels. His counsel had pleaded with the judge not to impose too harsh a fine. Dempster, he explained, was "not paid as much as people think".

Hmmm. Dumpster is in fact paid at a rate of £1,600 per column, for six columns a week. A quick calculation shows that this comes to £499,200 a year. He has, however, lost one of the perks that go with his megastar status. For years he has been on British Airways' computerised list of VIPs who are given an "automatic upgrade" to first class whenever they travel. But it seems his name has now been removed from the BA computer.

Why should this be?

IN THE great non-"battle of the breakfast shows", everyone agreed that Chris Evans had trounced his Radio One rival Zoe Ball.

Well, almost everyone. The only paper to side with Zoe was the *Mirror* — unsurprisingly, since she has a sponsorship deal with the rag and has appeared in several *Mirror* promotions. "*Mirror* Girl Zoe Slays the Whinger," announced a loyal front-page headline.

Alas, the *Mirror* got rather carried away by its own enthusiasm. Five days after the "brekkie war" started, it ran an "exclusive" interview with la Ball in which she said Evans was "bitter and stupid". Zoe and her agent, Peter Powell, went ballistic, complaining that the quotes were a complete fabrication. Powell has now informed the *Mirror* that Zoe is a "*Mirror* Girl" no more: she will never again promote the paper and in future all her interviews will appear exclusively in the *Sun*.

Piers "Boy" Morgan, furious at losing a valuable asset so carelessly, has ordered a full inquest. The obvious target is hackette Carole Aye Maung, who wrote the fateful interview; but she is passing the blame to features editor Tina Weaver, who apparently "improved" her copy.

MARIAM RAJAVI, leader of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, was banned from Britain last week. "We have decided her presence is not conducive to the public good," a foreign office spokesman said, explaining that her council was a front for the Mujahedin al Khalq (MKO), an outfit backed by Saddam Hussein.

The spokesman added that the FO had "long regarded the MKO as a terrorist organisation". What a pity, then, that the mandarins neglected to warn their boss, Robin Cook.

During a drinks reception at last month's Labour party conference Cook and Tony Blair were seen chatting happily to members of the National Council of Resistance, who had been granted delegate status at the conference. Pictures of the encounter were proudly displayed in the Iranian group's newspaper, *Iran Zamin*, but the only mention in the British press was a piece in the early edition of the *Guardian* on 16 October headed: "Labour Feted Iranians Linked to Terror Group."

In all subsequent editions of that day's *Grauniad*, this embarrassing story had mysteriously disappeared without trace.

WORLD OF HYPE

THE most ardent defender of Piers Merchant has been Gerald Howarth, newly-elected Tory MP for Aldershot who has a wealth of experience dealing with the media.

In 1993, with Patrick Robertson, he set up Task Force Communications "to carry on the business of providers of parliamentary and governmental relations".

The chairman was Lord Parkinson, former Tory party chairman (who's back again as chairman now); and the *Times* reported: "Task Force has the confidence to offer as one of its services 'crisis management, and scandal (personal and corporate)' ". One of Task Force's most lucrative clients was the Referendum party which opposed the Tories at the last general election.

EXPECT the high flying, spiv-ridden Russian stockmarket to crash. Unit trust company Save & Prosper, aka You Save and We Prosper, has run an all expenses-paid trip for the personal finance hacks to the former Soviet Union and Poland to generate free publicity for its new Eastern European scheme.

Tripsters included Nick Gardner (*S.inday Times*), Stephen Day (*Daily Express*) and Ian Cowie (*Daily Telegraph*). The freebie brought in more dividends than most Save & Prosper shareholders have ever seen.

The *Telegraph*'s Cowie wrote long articles on investing in Russia both before he went and again on his return. Neither mentioned his intellectual or other debts to the Save & Prosper PR machine.

But the four-day jaunt, which cost more than most Russians earn in a year, was a minor excursion compared with the week-long GT (Gin & Tonic) Unit Trust publicity freebie to San Francisco.

Freeloading hacks, including Nick Gardner (again), *Guardian* contributor Simon Reid, and *Money Marketing*'s Emma Tyrell, flew Virgin Upper Class to San Francisco, stayed in the five-star Park Hyatt and travelled everywhere by stretch limo. This left little change out of £10,000 a head. They were even bankrolled in bars, including one heavy "Irish night" session.

Hapless readers who were suckered into previous unit trusts on the back of freebie-fuelled puff pieces have lost fortunes. Those who bought the Singer and Friedlander South American trust after its 14-day no-cash trip for journos three years ago have lost a quarter of their money. And following the Kleinwort Benson trip to Malaysia and the Far East nearly two years ago to push its ineptly named "Asian Growth" trust, investors have seen nearly half their money evaporate.

RICHARD BRANSON's new Virgin One bank got acres of flattering coverage which scarcely mentioned all the obvious pitfalls in his idea of a "permanent overdraft" account.

And no wonder. Shortly before the launch Branson had the good sense to send free Psion personal organisers to all the most important personal-finance hacks, along with his press release.

Apart from hacks at the *Independent*, who nobly donated their Psions to charity, the rest of Fleet Street gratefully accepted this shameless bribe. At the *Sunday Times* the craven hacks held on to their Psions only until a ferocious email arrived from the managing editor warning them that if they did not return them immediately they would face disciplinary action.

HACKWATCH

AGONY ATKINS

ANNE ATKINS was a vicar's wife of the utmost obscurity until she won the jackpot in fame's lottery by delivering a rant against homosexuals on Radio 4's Thought For The Day.

The *Daily Telegraph* promptly signed her up as an agony aunt, assuming she would provide a weekly dose of matronly comfort and reassurance to the Herbert Gussetts. Alas, something has gone very wrong...

6 June: A pregnant woman complains that passengers on the bus or tube — even *Telegraph* readers — never give up their seats for her. Is this because men are frightened that women will see such gestures as "chauvinistic"? "Dear oh dear," Anne replies. "What are you, men or mice, you weedy male *Telegraph* readers out there?" Of course pregnant women should be given a seat — "and chaps, if an annoyed feminist punches you on the nose, I suggest you spank her bottom."

13 June: Anne rebukes a correspondent who implicitly accuses her of wearing 15 denier Wolford seamless stockings. "Do I *look* like a woman who wears 'seamless' stockings?" she demands indignantly. "Before I know it, someone will accuse me of owning a pair of tights." Besides, "it is summer, I am barelegged". Phwooarh!

20 June: "Our sex life is non-existent," writes a 49-year-old man. "The problem is that I suffer from acute premature ejaculation." Anne has a no-nonsense solution: "Suggest [to your wife] that you make love more often — preferably *much* more often... Get cracking."

27 June: "Dear Anne — Two weeks ago, you dismissed as a cheat a man who, after years of enforced celibacy, had found a measure of happiness outside his marriage. I feel your judgment was wrong and deeply unkind." Another correspondent points out that the man's wife had broken her marriage vows by refusing sex, thereby entitling him to break his. "I agree," Anne replies impatiently. "But *she* didn't write to me. If she had, I would have told her to stop being so selfish, rip off her clothes and jump into bed with him straight away."

25 July: "Dear Anne — Ten years ago, my husband asked for a divorce because I was having an affair. He insisted on keeping the children." Now the ex-husband won't speak to her; and even though she has confessed her sins many times and prayed for forgiveness, "my vicar has suggested I've only received what was coming to me." Quite right, says Anne: "Our Maker has given us clear instructions, and you have ignored them all..."

15 August: A reader complains that his wife has broken her marital vow to obey him. "A few years ago I was threatened with redundancy unless I moved a long distance away," he reports. "I assumed my wife's attitude would be 'whither thou goest, I will go', but I was wrong. She wouldn't contemplate the upheaval. So I was made redundant and could find only poorly-paid, part-time work. Today we live in near-penury." Anne is her usual sympathetic self: "You got off lightly. Jesus lost his life, you lost your job... Believe me, it is far better to have a poorly-paid, part-time job than an unhappy wife. So stop resenting it."

22 August: "Dear Anne — Recently, my husband of 10 years dropped a bombshell. He said he thought it 'only fair to tell me' that he had been having an affair for the past six months." Anne's advice: find out what made him want the other woman. "Was he sexually frustrated?" she wonders. "Try to provide what he needs to make him happy — within your marriage." In short, rip your clothes off...

5 September: One of Anne's regular correspondents, Harry Lovelock, finds himself "bemused" by the mass hysteria following Princess Diana's death. "Then you are unusual," Anne snaps. "Unhappy children, neglected wives, mousey teenagers and bulimic girls all feel that Diana represented their troubles; the sick, the disabled and the elderly know that she loved and cared..."

12 September: "Dear Anne — In your reply to Mr Lovelock, with whom I agree, you might have found space to mention a few more people who could have identified with the late Princess: disloyal wives, manipulative divorcees, unchaste women, etc..." Yes, Anne agrees crossly, "I could have done. But it isn't always necessary to state the obvious."

26 September: "Dear Anne — Is there such a thing as conjugal rights?" a woman asks. "After 25 years of marriage, I just want to be left in peace. Sex is overrated..." Anne is unimpressed. "Of *course* there is such a thing as conjugal rights," she thunders. "You say you love your husband, but you are refusing to give him the affection he needs... You chose to give yourself to him 25 years ago... You are cheating on your husband."

3 October: "Dear Anne — I strongly disagree with your views on 'conjugal rights'... To judge from some of your replies, you seem to think that a woman should behave like a nun before the wedding, and like a prostitute afterwards!" Anne concurs: "Yes, I think that sums up the Christian attitude to sex pretty neatly... St Paul said that a married person has no authority over his body; he owes it to his spouse to make love frequently (1 Corinthians, 7:4). Which just goes to show that obedience to God can be jolly good fun."

10 October: Another letter from Harry Lovelock: "Dear Anne — To get to the bottom line immediately, why, from the age of 50 or so, do men start to lose their *derrieres*?" Anne doesn't know, but suggests two alternative remedies: either take lots of exercise to improve muscle tone, or learn to enjoy the symptoms of age as you slump in your armchair with a glass of whisky and a pipe. "I strongly advise the latter," she adds. "My husband has just bought a pair of half-moon spectacles that make him look twice his age. I find them absurdly attractive, and have thereby come to the conclusion that accepting one's age — or even augmenting it — is extremely sexy."

More legover, vicar?

"Trick or Treaty?"

HELLO! FERGIE

THE office of Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of Freebiana, reacted with fury to stories that she was to be paid £1m a year to write for *Hello!* magazine. It described the idea as "grotesque" and said the prospect of her signing a contract was "very, very remote".

Grotesque it might be — but a contract *has* been signed, negotiated directly with the magazine's Spanish owner Eduardo de Sanchez. With exquisite timing, he flew la Freebiana out to Madrid in his private plane the week after Diana's funeral.

Hello! executives are petrified that the death of their icon will slash sales (this week they were reduced to placing a picture of the deceased princess on their cover). But hiring the author of *Budgie the Helicopter* is not a sure bet.

The duchess also writes for the *New York Times* syndication service in the United States where, because some provincial US papers pay as little as $30 a "column", the *Times* is desperate to recoup some of its outlay. Although part of the original agreement with la Freebiana was that her jottings would not be offered to British papers, so desperate is *NYT* that it recently offered her drivellings to the *Mirror* for £500 a go. But even the wretched *Mirror* turned la Freebiana down flat.

CURSE OF HELLO!

THIS summer model Normandie Keith and polo-playing Lucas White, son of the late zillionaire financier Lord White of Hull, gushed "exclusively" to *Hello!* about their wonderful love.

Alongside pages of glossy pix, *Hello!* reported breathlessly how in the 15 months since their engagement "the young couple have rarely been apart." That was July. On 15 October, barely three months later, *Daily Mail* diarist Nigel Pratt Dumpster brought the sad news that Lucas and Normandie are to end their 18-month engagement. Explained a friend: "They hardly ever saw each other."

TUC general-secretary John Monks' outburst over the government's shambolic position on European monetary union surprised many of the brothers who think the whole idea is bonkers.

But while Monks' support for monetary union is genuine, the real reason for his strange behaviour has more to do with the cartwheels Labour has performed over its commitment to union recognition.

Promised in the manifesto, promised again in time for crucial union votes at Labour's conference, the commitment then became mangled by a "senior source" who told the *Sunday Times*' Andrew Grice that a forthcoming white paper "will dash the unions' hopes" and that "some thought Tony Blair's tough line on union power was just a device to help us win the election — soon they will find out it's for real".

This was too much for the long suffering Monks, who directed his frustration at the government by highlighting its mishandling of the European question. Funnily enough, Grice's nickname in the House of Commons press gallery is "Mandy's urinal". No prizes for guessing the identity of the "senior source"...

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown's former speech writer Douglas Alexander emerged clear winner following a bloodless coup when he won the nomination for the vacant Paisley South seat following the death of Gordon McMaster.

Considered by insiders to be Brown's protégé and a rising star, Alexander, who fought the Perth constituency twice, is no stranger to the cut and thrust of grassroots politics. What came as a surprise was the dearth of big-name hitters keen to contest a seat that was once considered a safe Labour stronghold.

First nominations came up with Pat McFadden, an adviser in the Downing Street political unit. Those close to Mr Blair say Pat was "always too valuable to lose" — so McFadden dropped out of the race.

Alexander, who strolled home beating Margaret McCulloch, a former Lothian councillor, by 100 votes to 13, says he "is looking forward" to polling day on 6 November. Is another easy victory on the cards for this son of a Church of Scotland minister?

Meanwhile suspended Renfrewshire West MP Tommy Graham has had a head-to-head with Labour official Mike Penn to discuss the charges against him: ie, did he besmirch the name of the late McMaster, as well as that of the Paisley North MP Mrs Irene Adams? Mr Graham has been told he will learn the NEC's decision six days before the Paisley South by-election. Interestingly, Graham has decided to hire the London law firm Peter Carter-Fuck & Partners to begin legal action against two English-based newspapers.

RANDY Rochdale MP Lorna Fitzsimons is in trouble with the 20,000 Muslims in her constituency.

First she told an interviewer from the *News of the World* that she was "an immensely sexual person" — she is unmarried — who often looks at male MPs and thinks "cor, I wouldn't mind giving him one!" Alas this is not often reciprocated as the MP acknowledged when she told the *Screws* that she is determined "to lose weight, drink less and have more sex!"

Not surprisingly the ladies in the Rochdale Mosque were all a-flutter at the MP's expression of regret that, now being an MP, she couldn't "have al fresco sex, three in a bed or get totally out of it on drugs". The local mullahs may now approach her with some trepidation following her admission: "If I want to have sex with someone I tell them. If I want to do something particularly gross with them, I tell them."

Can this really be the little girl who during the election walked barefoot in the local mosques, her head covered in a hejab and nodding oh so sympathetically to the plight of Muslims in Kashmir?

MEANWHILE Gerald Kaufman is Top of the Pops with Muslims following the debacle of the queen's visit to India which ended with the Indian authorities reducing a disabled British woman diplomat to tears and threatening to arrest the queen's press secretary under the gaze of Her Maj.

Moon faced Kaufman was beaming at Westminster this week knowing that his arm lock on Robin Cook had produced the pro-Kashmiri albatross around the neck of the royal tour. Labour's policy took its anti-Indian turn at the Labour conference of 1995, Kaufman having written the successful resolution with the then Pakistan high commissioner.

Just in case there was any slippage Kaufman organised another fringe meeting — in the Bombay Indian Restaurant — at the Brighton conference this year. When Derek Fatchett, minister of state at the foreign office, repeated Labour's policy Kaufman leapt to his feet, called it the Brighton declaration and hailed it as "the most significant British government statement on Kashmir for 50 years", neatly nailing down the foreign office which was even then packing its bags for the royal tour.

An aide to Labour's token Indian wallah Keith Vaz remarked "that's India bowled out for a Bombay Duck".

WHILE Labour MP Mohamed Sarwar is being investigated over allegations of corruption in his Glasgow Govan constituency, his name has come up in an unrelated case in the sheriff's court.

Diamond Investigations, a firm of private detectives, went to court to recover an unpaid bill for carrying out debugging work and for investigations into a possible smear campaign against Sarwar.

The detectives had been instructed to carry out the work by Imran Muneer, then a reporter with the *Scottish Asian Voice*, two years ago during Mr Sarwar's selection battle for his current seat.

In December last year Paisley sheriff court ruled that Mr Muneer, who is now believed to be out of the country, was liable for the bill of £2,350. Although Sarwar denies any knowledge of the work carried out by the firm, Diamond Investigations believes it is technically possible to pursue him for the unpaid bill as his name appears on an invoice from the company to Mr Muneer.

The Govan MP is no stranger to controversy. In the run up to the May election there were allegations that he added names to the electoral register illegally. Later, claims that he had tried to buy off an opponent led to his current suspension from the Labour party.

ON the very day Labour's national executive committee suspended with much brouhaha a number of senior Glasgow councillors in an anti-sleaze drive, Jack McConnell, general-secretary of the Scottish Labour party flew to the United States on a "fact finding tour".

His mission? To learn how the Americans have managed to establish a political system so, er, free of the taint of corruption and scandal. His destination? The Democrat one-party state of Chicago, home to the late Mayor Daley, whose name signifies a very particular kind of urban machine politics.

If McConnell wanted to visit a city where the structures of local government — dominated for so long by a single party — are rife with nepotism, indolence and corruption, why didn't he just stay in Glasgow?

FABIAN HAMILTON, the on-message Labour MP for Leeds North East who was selected after Tony Blair vetoed leftwinger Liz Davies, has suffered a setback in the high court.

Lord Justice Brooke and Mr Justice Gage chucked out the MP's claim that attempts to prosecute him privately for alleged dodgy business dealings were a "vexatious" abuse of the legal process by supporters of rival candidates.

Now Hamilton will have to answer the charges and defend his business record in a full court hearing. This could prove interesting. As reported in *Eye* 931, Hamilton has spent the first months of his parliamentary career waxing lyrical on... er, the problem of dodgy business practices.

IT WAS just like old times for veteran campaigner Peter Hain when he went to Offset UK 97, hailed as "the biggest business event of its kind in Europe".

All the world's top arms manufacturers sent reps to Llandudno, north Wales, on 8 October to discuss "offset" deals whereby foreign governments place orders in Britain in exchange for arms contracts. Among the world giants — Lockheed, Morthrop, Hughes, Boeing — was that old stalwart British supplier Armscor, the huge South African arms firm against which Hain and his chums used to vent their spleen in the bad old days.

The demonstrators were there in force too, and so were the old slogans: BLOOD ON THEIR HANDS! SHAME ON YOU! NO ARMS TRADE FOR WALES! Labour MP Ann Clwyd even put out a press release pointing out that many of the companies' promotional literature shows their "involvement in the manufacture of anti-personnel land mines".

Her colleague Peter Hain was at Llandudno too — but not to demonstrate. His job as parliamentary under secretary for Wales was to make the speech of welcome to the firms' representatives.

GOOD to see Sir Ray Powell, "old" Labour MP for Ogmore, is upholding traditional values in south Wales where he was one of four Welsh Labour dinosaurs who voted "no" in the referendum.

Shortly after the devolution vote Bridgend borough council leader Jeff Jones was hauled before his local Labour party executive (which falls within the Ogmore constituency) to explain why he had campaigned for a "yes" vote in the September referendum — despite the fact that "yes" was national Labour party policy.

It just so happens that Sir Ray has, er, influential support on the executive which interrogated Jones. Powell's daughter Janice Gregory is the women's officer; her husband Mike is membership secretary; and Mike's brother Derek is assistant secretary.

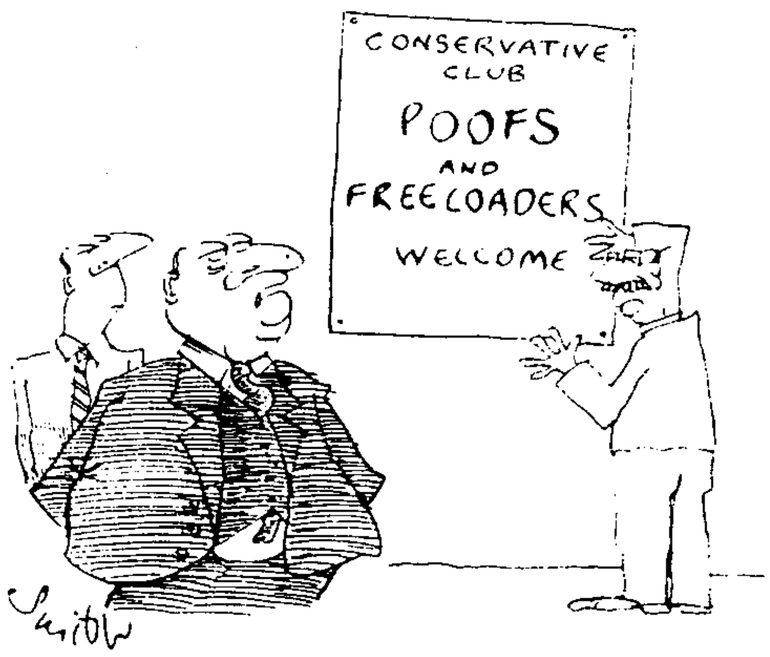
Jones walked out of the executive's kangaroo court declaring "the Bridgend party is heading for disaster". Meanwhile Sir Ray remains true to family values saying he's proud that Janice et al have followed him into the political jungle of south Wales Labour politics.

SIX months is a *very* long time in "new" Labour politics.

Before the election the party promised a "radical shake-up" of energy policy to ensure a level playing field and a future for deep-mined coal as part of a diverse and secure energy market.

And now? The government has given permission for a new *gas*-fired power station, and major coal owner Richard Budge is warning that eight pits — a third of the UK's remaining coal industry — are threatened with closure.

Will energy minister John Battle stand up for the industry, or has he decided it is already a lost cause? Several extremely brassed-off mining communities in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire are keen to find out.



"I don't think he's quite got the hang of our new image"

HISTORIC MEETING

CONTINUING proof that the government does not know its arse from its elbow emerged at the Commonwealth conference discussions on the great Lockerbie cock-up (*Eyes passim*).

Nelson Mandela started the panic with a speech in open conference denouncing the British government's obstinate refusal to consider holding a trial of the so-called "Libyan suspects" for the 1988 Lockerbie bombing in a neutral country.

Mandela's devastating attack caused consternation among spin doctors who had arranged glamorous photo calls starring Tony Blair and Mandela, New Labour and New South Africa in happy harmony.

The contradiction seemed too much for Robin Cook, foreign secretary. He started the day saying there could be no compromise on the imperative need to hold the trial in Scotland. He even hinted that the American government might not cooperate with a trial held anywhere else, and that the Americans' agreement was crucial since they "hold" most of the evidence.

Whoops! The argument that the trial must be held in Scotland has depended up to now on the assertion that the lord advocate, Lord Hardie, "holds" all the evidence. Was Cook suggesting the US government would hold back evidence unless it approves of the place the trial is held?

When such points were put forcefully to Cook in Edinburgh by Jim Swire, whose daughter died in the bombing, Cook seemed to soften a little, announcing that the government had not completely ruled out a trial out of Scotland. This was slapped down at once by Tony Blair, who said such a trial was out of the question.

Enter, stage left, the government's environment and transport supremo John Prescott, who was quoted saying that an independent public inquiry into Lockerbie had not been ruled out. Whoops! Yes, it had — unequivocally, and twice on the same day (8 August) — in letters to bereaved families from Tony Lloyd MP, minister of state at the foreign office, and Glenda Jackson MP, an under-secretary in Prescott's own department.

The contradictions might be further exposed if some discontented bereaved relative in England tried to get an inquest into his/her relative's death at Lockerbie — by an English coroner.

THE search for those responsible for the unmitigated disaster of the queen's visit to India should not overlook HM ambassador in Delhi, Sir David Gore-Booth.

Eye readers (cf GORE-BLIMEY OF THE FO, *Eye* 829) may recall his brilliant performance at the Scott inquiry which included two foreign office gems: "When the Jordanians tell us something, it is true"; and: "The Iranians do not think logically."

After the Scott report was published, Sir David was gently demoted from his key position as ambassador to Saudi Arabia (pop 25 million, but wonderful arms contracts) to be ambassador in India (pop 700m, but less valuable arms contracts).

'Backbiter'

NOOKS and CORNERS

SOON, perhaps, every building in the centre of our towns and cities will be a pub or a restaurant. In the last few years, the impact of computers on our overdrafts has resulted in the closure of almost every high street bank and, almost without exception, these often fine buildings have been converted into cafés and bars. And a very good thing too. Churches and chapels too, redundant in their thousands, often go the same way — the lucky ones that is. But there are surely some buildings — just a few — which ought not to be made into yet another pub and damaged or trivialised by such a use.

One such is surely Marlborough House in Brighton. This grand and handsome mansion on the Old Steine, just a little south of the Royal Pavilion and nearer the sea, was once the finest building in Regency Brighton. It was certainly grander than the Marine Pavilion that Prinny built to be near his wife, Mrs Fitzherbert (whose house was and is next door to Marlborough House), before he enlarged it as an oriental fantasy.

Even today, with its pedimented wings with Palladian windows and delicated ornament, Marlborough House is a most striking thing. For it is the work of the great Robert Adam who, in 1786-87, enlarged a house of 1765 which had been owned by the 3rd Duke of Marlborough. The *Description of Brighthelmstone* of 1788 mentions that "the front is finished with Adam's artificial stone, and looks extremely handsome. The whole building is, indeed, justly admired for its elegance of architecture, as uniting simplicity with true grandeur". The Prince of Wales stayed at Marlborough House in 1789 and again in 1796 while recovering from his disastrous marriage to Caroline of Brunswick.

By the 1870s poor Marlborough House had come down in the world and was let to the Brighton School Board, which purchased it in 1891. Long used as offices, it is now owned by Brighton and Hove council and, until a few years ago, it served as a tourist information office. Today it is empty and the council is trying to sell it to the brewer Fuller, Smith & Turner which wants to make it into a pub-restaurant.

So what is wrong with that? Only that such a use inevitably damages the fine interiors, and recent research has found that much more survives of Adam's work than had previously been realised. Besides, the carriage drive in front will be given "hard landscaping" to make it into a beer garden. The character of what old Pevsner rightly called "the finest house in Brighton", right in the heart of the old town, will inevitably be compromised.

But, despite the strong objections of the Regency Society of Brighton & Hove, English Heritage is unlikely to object in principle to a change of use of the building, while Brighton & Hove council is unlikely to refuse planning permission for an asset it wants to sell. And, naturally, the brewer's architects claim that nothing will be altered or damaged. Why can't they stick to banks?

NATURALLY it helps ease things along when a local authority can grant itself planning permission to bugger up a building it owns and wants to make money from. This, of course, is the situation with the Free Trade Hall in Manchester (Eye 925). This magnificent building, a symbol of Manchester's radical history, has been redundant since the Hallé Orchestra moved to the new Bridgewater Hall and the council wants to sell it to a consortium headed by La Sande and Taylor Woodrow to convert it into an hotel. A frightful scheme has been drawn up by R. James Chapman, architects, for a tower rising behind Edward Walters' preserved facade.

This has been condemned by almost every responsible body which has considered it, both in terms of design and the appropriateness of the new function, and a petition against it has been signed by 4,000 Mancunians. Now, following the formal objection of English Heritage, it has at last been announced that there is to be a public inquiry into the hotel project. For Richard Leese, leader of Manchester city council, however, this is "appalling news" and he accuses the opposition of "emotive and muddled thinking... Luddites." Odd that he should be so fearful of a public examination of his council's "vision".

Meanwhile Coun Pat Karney, deputy council leader and chairman of the city centre sub-committee, has dismissed the campaigners against the hotel scheme as "middle class tossers". There, perhaps, speaks the real voice of "new" Labour. Rum, really, that it should be middle class tossers who care about Manchester's great radical past rather than the elected representatives of the Labour party who run this unfortunate city.

'Piloti'

IN THE COURTS

WESTMINSTER Tories' high court appeal against their surcharge for alleged gerrymandering has descended into farce.

At stake is the £32m which the Westminster Tories, then led by Dame Shirley Porter, may or may not have fiddled out of the public purse through the homes-for-votes scam of the late 80s and early 90s.

For the last few weeks passers-by have been greeted by the ridiculous spectacle of 10 or so decrepit Porter supporters carrying placards claiming "The Westminster Six are innocent". One of them, the elderly Patrick Evershed, president of the Westminster South Conservative Association, even heckled district auditor John Magill and chased him up the steps as he arrived with his ledgers and accounts.

But m'learned friends are not having much luck extricating useful evidence from the accused and their witnesses on account of a collective loss of memory and an outbreak of mutual buck-passing.

Porter herself, on a rare trip to England, has told the court she can't remember anything. If any gerrymandering went on it was the fault of then housing director Graham England, ex-housing chairman Peter Hartley and former deputy leader David Weeks.

Peter Hartley can't remember anything either. If any gerrymandering went on it was the fault of Porter, England and Weeks. England, himself, amazingly can't remember much. He blames the other three, as does Weeks who also, astonishingly, er, can't remember anything.

The other two appellants in the case are ex-managing director Bill Phillips, who says he didn't know the eight wards were marginal; and former housing manager Paul Hayler who's not feeling well and has been allowed to delay his appeal pending recovery. Meanwhile Roger Rosewell, Porter's right hand man for the last 15 years, an associate editor of the *Mail on Sunday* and better known in the town hall as "Thing" or "The Man With No Name Number One", found the experience of seeing his one-time "mistress" cross-examined so stressful he had to be escorted from the building on the verge of collapse.

'Gerry Mander'

TV

Holiday (BBC1)

The Real Holiday Show (Channel 4)

THE television holiday programmes used to turn up for a run in January to tout summer vacations and another in late summer to plug winter breaks. But both the holiday operators and the channel controllers are getting greedy, and this year the BBC's Holiday and its Channel 4 rival The Real Holiday Show suddenly returned in the same late October week.

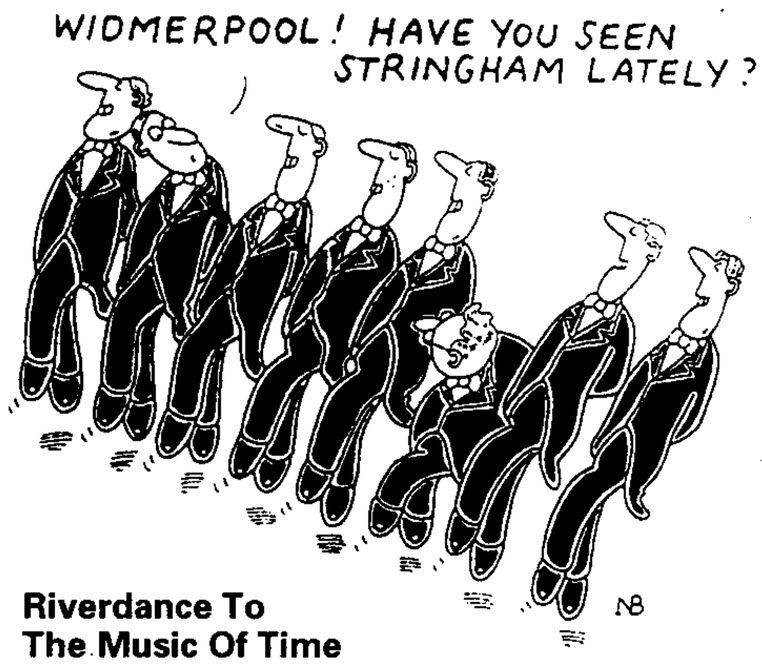
Holiday has traditionally been presented by the BBC's avuncular male frontpersons: Michelmore, Bough, Lynam. This tactic reflected executives' uneasy awareness that the cheery summaries of package tours — complete with prices and booking details at the end — amounted to one long advert on a supposedly non-commercial network. These laidback chaps were supposed to make the whole thing look more like telling than selling.

Commercialism has always been one of *Holiday*'s two biggest problems. The other is sexism. In its early decades, no puff for a summer package was complete without the shot of busty women rubbing suncream into their breasts. The anchorchap would generally be allowed a wishful leer.

These days, that kind of footage can get a chap a one-way air ticket to Siberia. Still required to disguise its interest in plugs, *Holiday* now has to be subtle about its fascination with tits. On both counts, there is a tangible tension.

The presenter these days is Jill Dando, the Diana-lookalike newsreader who, since September, has provided important visual therapy for a mourning nation. In television presentation, girl power has been allowed on predominantly male terms. Sue Barker — though a useful symbol for the BBC of female encroachment on traditional masculine territory — is physically a bonus for the classic unreconstructed male viewer of sports. In the same way, Jill Dando's hosting of the *Holiday* show represents a professional victory for women but a visual triumph for male fantasy. The corporation's most comely presenter has been entrusted with the one series in which she might legitimately wear a swimsuit.

Indeed, *Holiday* now seems to be directed on a cynical striptease principle, in which persevering viewers are rewarded with a little more of Dando in each link. Last week, for example, she was first seen crouched in a hot tub with only shoulders showing. Next she was walking towards viewers down a beach, the framing of the shot hovering tantalisingly around the tops of her thighs. Finally — for those who resisted the blandishments of ITV for more than 25 minutes — she was glimpsed in the final link sitting sideways on a bench, her legs stretched out. Dando's remark about one holiday operator "using juicy incentives to persuade you to go" began to seem like self-reference to the programme's own approach.



Riverdance To The Music Of Time

Hypocritical on the female flesh issue, *Holiday* remains vulnerable on the charge of free advertising. Apart from a small murmur about the price of one of the packages, every package on offer in the first show of the new series was paradise, the directors of the little illustrative filmlets obligingly providing stunning sunsets wherever possible to close out the reports. To be true to its subject, the appeal of its presenter to male viewers and the journalistic approach of its reporters, the series really ought to be renamed *Getting Off*.

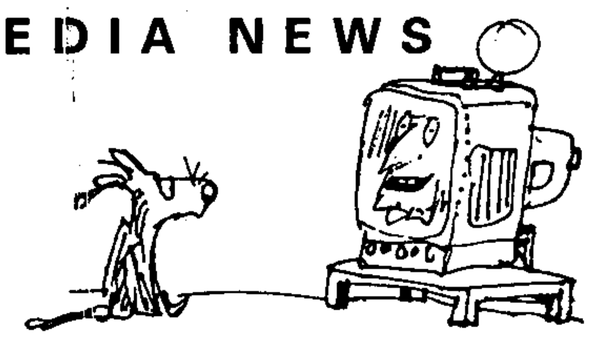
Holiday's one recent innovation has been to use occasional "ordinary people" as the focus of some reports. This technique is a clear steal from *The Real Holiday Show*, which — far from buying up the film rights to the latest batch of travel brochures, as *Holiday* does — sends camcorders with viewers on holidays they have already planned. At the end of each report, no prices or tour operator phone numbers are given.

As a result, the series isn't really a travel programme at all but a fly-on-the-wall documentary. The majority of the holidays go disastrously wrong. Last week a young couple — Graeme and Rose — revealed to the studio audience that their relationship had ended during a strained vacation in Hong Kong, in which each, as their video revealed, had become jealous of their partner's flirtations with others. A large Liverpudlian family's planned idyll in Greece had climaxed in a night of eating and drinking in which, the materfamilias confided, she had collected "twenty-two buckets of sick and two buckets of diarrhoea".

Channel 4 has just celebrated its 15th birthday and *The Real Holiday Show* is a good reminder to those who now run it of the kind of programmes which made the channel great. This series looked at established holiday shows — bland, sycophantic and using professional reporters — and did the exact reverse. The show's energy and aggression make *Holiday* look like a wet weekend.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS



ON THE day of the queen's visit to Amritsar, BBC World Service's lunchtime news could muster just a single hack to describe the scenes to the audience of tens of millions of Indians. Where were the other half dozen stationed in Amritsar for the event? Er, sweating over a pilot for John Birt's 24 hour news service.

Back in the UK executives are trumpeting a Gallup survey that suggests that "up to 80 per cent of the UK population would view a BBC News 24 hour channel at least once a week". What they failed to add to their press release was the more disturbing finding that 70 percent of the UK population has no idea what digital TV is.

As the 24 hour news start date looms there is panic among BBC managers over problems with the service's much heralded new computer system, ENPS. One correspondent's internal memo complains that any script written in the system (designed to allow hacks access to pictures and sound from all the BBC) is automatically erased if the hack stops typing for more than a minute.

ENPS also contains a pronunciation package — in American English. Thus BBC correspondents are advised by ENPS to pronounce tomato "tuh-may'-toh" and Tuesday is of course "Tooz'-Dee". Even worse, a recent live demonstration of the hi-tech newsroom turned to farce when *all* newsroom computers locked up depriving on-screen reporters of scripts, sound and vision. Eventually old-fashioned technicians and VT editors, recently made redundant by the "modernising" BBC, were asked to come back and save the blushes in return for huge cheques.

And there are big cheques to write, too. The BBC is bound by contract to use its dodgy computer system come what may. With half a billion quid pumped into the concept, contractors and suppliers know Birt and his team of buyers are stuck and are very unlikely to make concessions if things go wrong again. Thus BBC money has had to be "ring-fenced" to ensure that if (or when) the programme crashes before launch, teams of technologically quaint trouble-shooters can quickly be put back on the payroll.

Morale is so low that Tony Hall, head of news and current affairs, has had to take control over the heads of existing managers and launch a charm offensive. Already committed to a long list of uncomfortable lunches with troublemakers like James Naughtie and John Humphrys, Hall also has to see an army of brittle 24 hour news managers who are now "out of the loop".

CEEFUX

ITV 2100: Film. *Blown Away*. Ruthless bomber Tommy Lee Jones terrorises the city of Boston but meets his match in the form of his former friend, explosives expert Jeff Bridges (1994). (NOT ULSTER.)

I-BSkyB

Take the excitement of Premiership Football, the glamour of Friends and boys with attitude and you're looking at the new sex and soccer TV drama Dream Team.

Sky One's new sporting soap kicks off at six tonight with the hunky soccer players of fictional Harchester United promising passion on the pitch... and more passion off it.

SARAH MOOLLA
Sun

THE BBC's 75th anniversary was marked by just about every major publication — but almost missed by BBC radio news.

On the day, the hapless radio news team discovered they lacked archive material with which to celebrate their own birthday. It was a weekend, and as a consequence of Birtist cuts the archive department couldn't handle the request. On the brink of disaster, someone remembered the BBC shop had just reopened as part of the director-general's so-called BBC Experience and that there was a compact disc available... complete with archive material.

At first the producer was told he would have to buy the disc but he was eventually allowed to borrow it. The piece duly went out on the 6pm news to all-round gasps of relief. Good to see the Birtian newsgathering empire functioning so efficiently.

LAST month the BBC's in-house magazine *Ariel*, known to its readers as *Pravda*, changed the way it advertised internal job vacancies. Now grouped by directorate, they clearly illustrate the direction the corporation is taking.

On 7 October the news directorate solicited applications for a finance manager, two management accountants, a senior finance assistant, a number of finance assistants on a lower scale, a costing analyst, a number of finance clerks on a lower scale and, er, three journalists.

No journalist's post at all was offered in the same issue's administration, finance & accounts, information technology, management, marketing & public relations, personnel & training or central directorates sections.

WHEN *News at Ten* illustrated a report on "road rage" by interviewing a sufferer from this yobbish and dangerous disorder, it blacked out the woman's face as she confessed to the terrible aggression she experiences once behind a wheel.

"I shout and scream out of the window," she admitted. "I have to express myself." And who was this ogress whose identity had to be hidden from the public? Step forward Lydia Aydon, news editor of, er, *Auto Express*, which claims to be Britain's biggest selling motor weekly.

No doubt car manufacturers who lend motoring hacks flashy motors on "long-term tests" would have liked to have been warned of Lydia's aggression problems.

THE affection felt for Trevor McDonald by staff at ITN has taken a sharp dip lately.

The rot began during the recent junket to Hong Kong where Trevor was reluctant to deliver even the shortest recorded introduction without the assistance of an autocue machine. This meant that eight large boxes of equipment had to be humped around and set up on various pavements to be ready when the great man stepped from his limousine.

Things have now taken a dramatic turn for the worse following a profile by the *Daily Telegraph*'s Boris Johnson in which McDonald boasted that he writes all his own scripts. "I do have a scriptwriter," he told Boris. "But he thinks he's more important than he is."

This outraged two of ITN's longest-serving journalists, Simon Holdich and David Stanley, both charged with the job of preparing lead-ins for *News at Ten*. McDonald does little more than put an asterisk beside their text to show his approval. The atmosphere became so sour that ITN editor Nigel Dacre — brother of *Daily Mail* editor Paul — had to call McDonald at home and demand that he apologise in person to his affronted colleagues.

THERE were alarming scenes backstage at Channel 5's *Jack Docherty Show* after Christine Hamilton was interviewed about her new book on British battleaxes.

Her husband, former Tatton MP Neil, was tearing around threatening that he would call in his lawyers after his wife's interview went seriously off the subject of her book. Once the interview was over, Ila Hamilton stormed off the set and added to the furore.

Neil "Liar and a Cheat" Hamilton was immediately on to the Channel 5 editing suites insisting the interview be severely cut. Unfortunately for the great viewing public, the lily-livered Channel 5 lawyers succumbed and part of the interview was censored. For the benefit of those not in the TV audience that night, Lord Gnome has been down on his hands and knees on the cutting room floor. This is what he found:

Cut 1

Asked whether she still shops in Harrods, Hamilton replies that she no longer shops there: "It's owned by a lying Egyptian" ...general uproar from audience... "Anyone who will invent the last words of the Princess of Wales for heavens sake".

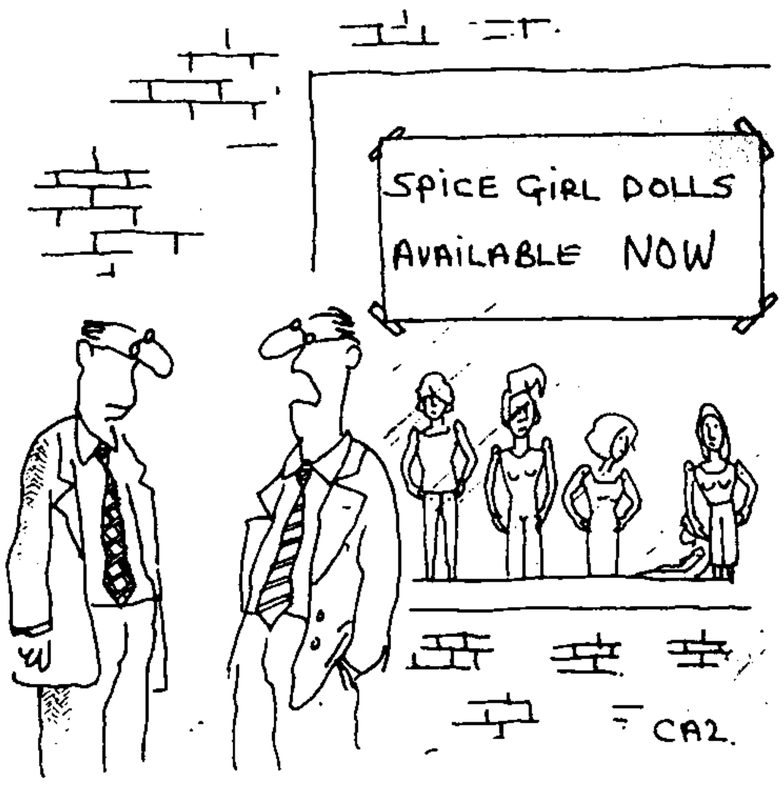
Cut 2

Hamilton: "We have a family motto. It's WDTT — 'We Do Things Together."

Docherty: "Oh. I thought it meant We Don't Tell the Truth".

Cut 3

Docherty on Christine and Neil's partnership: "You are kind of a double act, only with two straight men. Well, one bent guy, one bent slightly. [*Christine looks furious*] No, no I don't mean gay."



"Plastic and can't sing – what's new?"

COMPUTER UPDATE

AMERICAN computer conglomerate EDS's campaign to take over the universe is progressing nicely (*Eyes passim*).

EDS is now installing itself in its new offices at the UK vehicles inspectorate (VI) — yet another government contract scooped by the firm famed for its disastrous running of computer systems at the Child Support Agency and Inland Revenue.

And could things have gone wrong at the vehicles inspectorate already? Yes they could. Laptops arrived without batteries or printer leads (EDS and VI thought they came provided). Staff had been told the nightly upload and download would take five to ten minutes. During trials it has been taking five to six hours. They are now so far behind that staff haven't been able to update databases yet and have been left improving their games skills at "Minesweeper". Morale is already plummeting.

Meanwhile the armed forces, plagued by cock-ups over the sale of their married quarters, now have a new contractor to run their personnel computers. Er, step forward EDS which has been awarded the contract for 10 to 12 years.

EDS won the UK Inland revenue contract with a remarkably low bid. It is now running several hundred million pounds over budget.

CHARITY NEWS

MOHAMED FAYED is evidently too busy building up Fulham football club to concentrate on some of his charitable interests.

Quixotically the phoney pharaoh had agreed to fund Christian Newspapers Ltd, which publishes the *Christian Democrat* magazine, for three years at a cost of £5,000 a month. But after only a year, the struggling mag has received a letter from Fayed mouthpiece Michael Cole telling them to, er, "fug off."

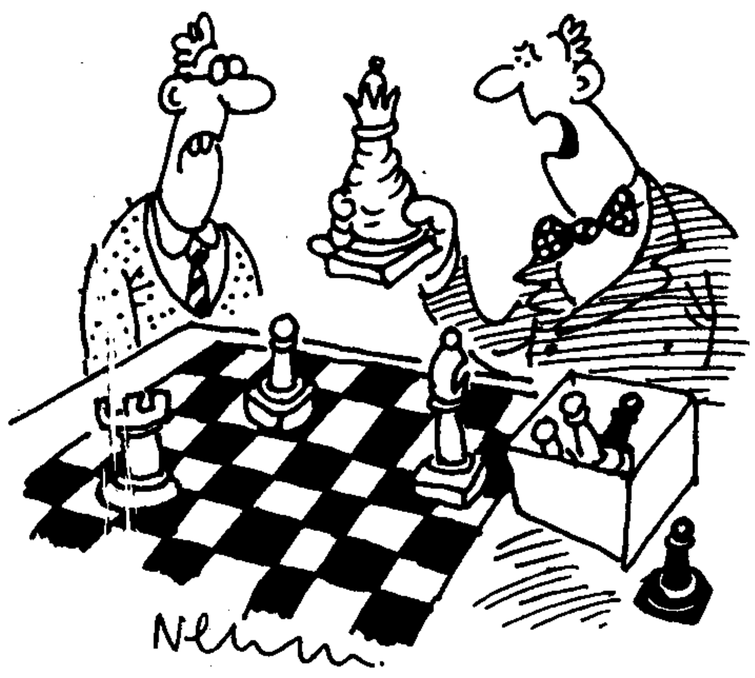
As a result the magazine has not appeared this month. Says managing editor Tony Lucas: "We weren't even given any grace period. Goodness knows why he suddenly pulled the plug. Perhaps he's a man of whims."

COURT & CIRCULAR

PEOPLE living in the small Welsh village of Felinfach are bemused why the Welsh office should spend more than £2m on a by-pass that effectively benefits only one house. They also wonder why it is squandering another £30,000 on a 6-ft high fence to screen off the house.

The answer, cynics conclude, is that Major Nic Paravacini's splendid mansion Glyn Celyn has often been used as a safe haven for trysts between Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles.

Conveniently the road which the by-pass has made redundant is now only of use for approaching Glyn Celyn, which can be done with comparative discretion. The unsightly fence, says the Welsh office, is needed to shield the Paravacini home from headlights on the by-pass. Villagers contest this. Indeed, so incensed were some locals that last week they managed to halt construction even though it has been three-quarters completed.



"It's the new-look Queen — tired and old."

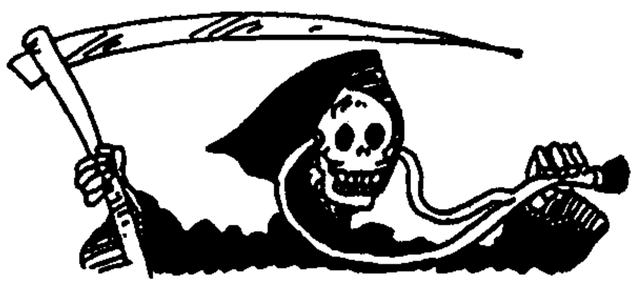
DIANABALLS

DESPITE the window displays and books of condolence, parts of Mohamed Fayed's Harrods empire have still not caught up with events of 31 August, it seems.

As the Harrods Calendar of Offers & Events for October is still insisting: "One hundred tickets are also available to Account Customers for the special Gala performance on December 8th, to be attended by Diana, Princess of Wales."

Meanwhile at the specialist magazine *Tractor & Machinery*, the November issue carries the following caption under a big colour picture of a red tractor:

"The Editor thought it appropriate to run a picture of a Massey Ferguson 35X, photographed down at Cowdray Park, West Sussex on July 6, 1997. This is in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales who so tragically died at the age of 36. Fittingly this tractor comes from her era, Diana regularly visited Cowdray Park during her life on this earth, where this tractor still works today."



DOING THE ROUNDS

Dobson's Choice

THE honeymoon is already over for "new" Labour's health secretary, Frank "cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients" Dobson.

John Ashbourne, chief executive of **Addenbrooke's hospital** in **Cambridge**, has been sending increasingly desperate memos to local GPs.

This month he wrote: "I need to reiterate that the bed situation at Addenbrooke's remains critical. We are now seeking to place patients known to be arriving well in excess of bed capacity. It would therefore be much appreciated if for the moment you could only refer to us those patients for whom *immediate* admission to Addenbrooke's is the only option."

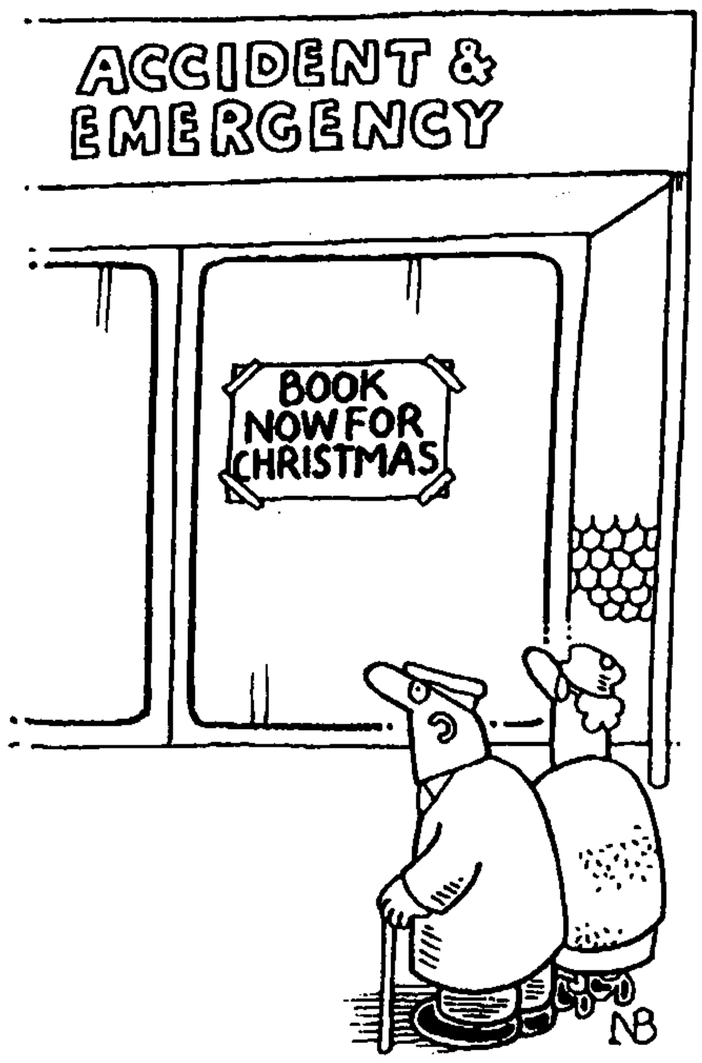
But where else are they supposed to go? Certainly not to nearby **Hitchinbrooke Health Care NHS Trust**, where Pat Wells-Johnson, patient care manager, has her own difficulties. "It has become necessary to restrict Acute Adult Admissions on a temporary basis, due to all beds being occupied. During this period, the A&E department will continue to accept blue light calls. These patients will be stabilised and transferred to other units..." And this was on 6 October, well in advance of the seasonal "winter crisis".

Cambridgeshire's problems are reflected nationwide due to — wait for it — an unprecedented rise in "summer emergencies". **Staffordshire ambulance service** reported a 16 percent increase in emergencies for August, forcing 30 managers to crew the ambulances. **North Yorkshire ambulance service** had a 10 percent rise, with rises of 15.9 percent in **Leicestershire** and 13 percent in **London**.

Meanwhile **Queens Medical Centre, Nottingham**, is losing five routine surgery lists a week due to emergency admissions, and elective surgery has been cancelled altogether at **Scarborough** and **Amersham hospitals**. At **Cornwall's Treliske hospital**, elective surgery was postponed for two weeks in August and will be off again from Christmas to February. **Torbay hospital** is choc full of emergencies, and **Warwick General** has 25 medical emergencies lying in inappropriate wards.

In **South Thames, St George's, Tooting, St Helier, Carshalton, Epsom, Kingston** and **Roehampton**, hospitals are all suffering because of a broke health authority. Overnight trolley stays for 10 patients at a time are commonplace, the routine surgery list stretches into *the next century* and the junior surgeons are getting so little experience that the posts may lose their accreditation.

At **New King George hospital, Ilford**, the wait for all surgery — including heart surgery — is at least 18 months. Extra consultant surgeons have been appointed but they can't do any work because of lack of funding. The social services budget has run over so there are also no resources to shift bed-blockers. **West Middlesex University hospital** includes a meal-on-trolley service as standard, and a limited number of routine operations are allowed on a weekly basis. In June the **Royal Belfast hospital** stopped accepting referrals from non-fundholders and the **Royal Victoria** stopped operating on them.



In September **Leeds General Infirmary** opened a new £90m wing, the **Yorkshire Heart Centre**. By October operations at it were halved, along with many elsewhere in the trust. **University Hospital Cardiff** is £2m in the red and having to take "fairly dramatic measures" to balance the books. The **Royal Gwent hospital** took in 20 emergencies in just two and a half hours on 8 August, and had to farm them out to neighbouring hospitals.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE "good news" that the European Union ban on beef exports from the United Kingdom may be lifted in Northern Ireland has not been greeted with unalloyed pleasure on the Emerald Isle. There is already a healthy trade in Northern Ireland meat with the rest of the world, and it may be disrupted.

How else can it be explained that the total for Eire domestic consumption of beef plus exports actually exceeds by a significant amount the amount of meat which could be produced from native Irish cattle?

Rumours abound that not a little of the nocturnal traffic across the Northern Ireland border into Eire is being moved in unmarked vehicles which look suspiciously like, er, cattle transporters. Meanwhile there has been a less healthy reciprocal "trade" in BSE-suspect animals which have found their way on to the Ulster lists (paid for by the UK government), thus enabling Eire farmers to evade its government's "whole herd" slaughter policy and keep BSE figures in Eire on the low side.

But the trade is by no means confined to the enterprises in Ireland. Despite the efforts of the Maffia's enforcement branch — which is being left floundering by the complexities and devious nature of the meat trade — thousands of tons of prime British beef are still leaving these shores.

One of the "scams" is simplicity itself. Lorries arrive from the continent apparently bearing legal consignments of European beef for sale to discerning buyers who wish to eat "safer" foreign beef rather than the "tainted" British variety. However, once the consignments arrive, alas, they are found to be "not up to specification" and are regretfully returned to be resold on the continental market.

In fact the lorries arrive in the UK empty — unchecked courtesy of the EU's "single market" which has abolished border controls on trade between member states. The drivers, however, bear the documents of the false consignments, which are then used for the return journey, covering the now anonymous British meat which, having been carefully butchered and packed, bears official marks to match the documentation.

Not a little of this meat is from over 30-month-old cattle, which are prohibited from sale on the UK market. Its maturity — and hence better taste — make it much prized on the continent, and not a little is said to be emanating from slaughterhouses which are being paid a tidy sum by HMG to dispose of these older cattle. With the costs effectively borne by the taxpayer, the carcases can be offered at cut-price, still bringing in a tidy profit.

As fast as the Maffia closes operations down others spring up, so easy is it to operate the scam. And, with such a "nice little earner", who on earth wants the EU ban lifted?

'New Muckspreader'

SIGNAL FAILURES

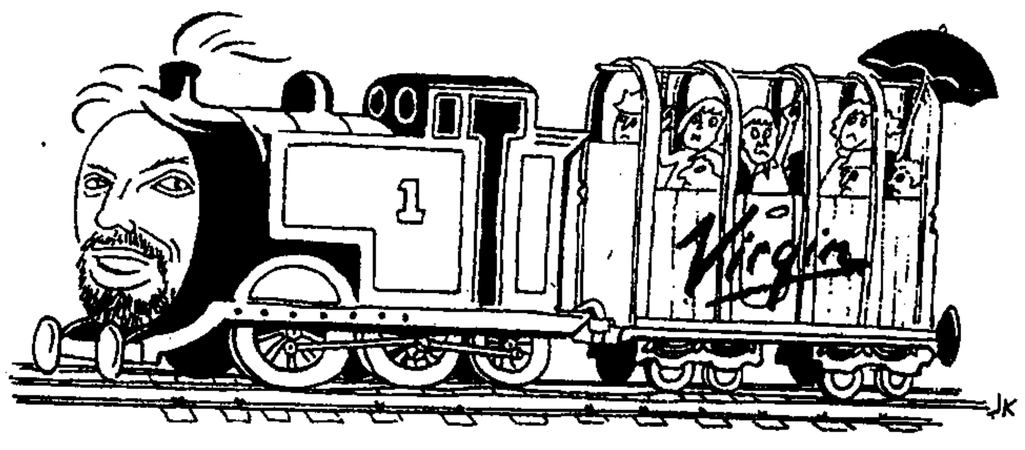
Focus on Virgin Trains

Richard Branson may now regret hiring Melinda Messenger for the Virgin Trains' launch last spring. Since then the business has probably generated more bad press than all other Virgin activities in the group's history. Staff shortages, pisspoor punctuality and tickets designed to rip-off customers give cause for complaint.

The West Coast route, one of Virgin's two InterCity franchises, is so decrepit (*Eyes passim*) matters were bound to take time to put right. Branson could have left the InterCity branding until the route is modernised and equipped with new trains that match public expectation of Virgin service. Instead he ticked the maximum publicity box and is paying the price. What used to be a dismal service in InterCity colours is now a dismal service in Virgin colours.

Punctuality on Virgin West Coast, linking Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and London Euston, is laughable but not funny. Latest figures from the office of passenger rail franchising show that in late August and early September well under three-quarters of Virgin services between Scotland and London were reaching their destinations within 10 minutes of the correct time. In June only 64 percent of the Scottish trains were punctual. Virgin services to and from the north-west and the Midlands have also failed to meet their punctuality target (90 percent to arrive no more than 10 minutes late) in most of the months since Virgin took over.

This performance cannot be blamed entirely on historic under-investment. The west coast line is only a fraction of the Virgin Cross Country network, where services have not met their punctuality target since April.



Elsewhere, Virgin Trains has caused ill-feeling by selfishness. A national apportionment system divides money raised from fares between the different train operators on each route. Most operators are happy with the system but Virgin is trying to grab a bigger share for itself.

It is also trying to force passengers to buy tickets in advance. It has increased by up to 15 percent the price of SuperSaver tickets (available at the time of travel) from southern England to Scotland while introducing cheap advance-purchase (apex) fares. To buy apex tickets passengers have to specify the outward and return trains and are restricted to Virgin services. Virgin claims it is aiming to make its railways more like airlines. But a more plausible explanation is that Virgin knows that nearly all money raised through the sale of Virgin apex tickets goes to Virgin: no other operator gets a cut.

Virgin's fares manipulators have made embarrassing errors. For some journeys they were asking more for a SuperSaver ticket with restrictions on travel times than a Saver ticket with no restrictions. Virgin Cross Country, after adjusting fares between the south coast and Scotland, charged more for tickets that barred travel via London than for tickets with no route restrictions. The difference was in the region of £10. Independent travel consultant Barry Doe wrote to the rail regulator in May pointing out the problem; on 10 October Virgin finally ordered clerks not to sell the over-priced tickets.

Because the fares range is so complex, the rail inquiries phoneline often refers callers to Virgin's own info line. Here they are likely to hear a recorded message saying their call cannot be answered. "We are working hard to put this right as soon as we can by bringing more people into the train-line team."

That's O.K. then.

'Dr B. Ching'

Rotten Boroughs

Enfield

LABOUR councillor Richard Course, who called campaigners against a local housing development "unwashed, hysterical, hate-filled women", has now written a charming internal letter to Enfield environment committee.

In it he accuses the campaigners of being racists. "If we could guarantee 'whites only' on the site, most of the objectors would disappear," he claims. The campaigners, who object to the development on a contaminated site on environmental grounds, are not very happy. Or racist.

Junkets of the Week

COVENTRY city's 50-strong Labour group has been thinking hard about tackling poverty. Indeed, members had to get away from the Council House to ensure quality "thinking time", said leader John Fletcher.

Hence the decision to spend £900 at the Cable and Wireless College conference centre with swimming pool and award-winning chef. (The money could have paid for 300 meals-on-wheels or the food bill of a low-income single parent family for 30 weeks.)

In Glasgow meanwhile Alex Mosson, deputy lord provost and convenor of environmental services, is not letting his suspension by Labour in the votes for trips inquiry cramp his style. He is too busy attending a conference on waste management in Sardinia.

Manchester

MANCHESTER airport justifies its second runway by citing the big dividend it pays the public via its owner, the Labour-run city council. But taxpayers will not benefit much after all.

The airport claims it will pay shareholders (ie taxpayers) £4m a year from now until March 2002, a yield of just 1 percent on shareholders' funds. But the Civil Aviation Authority has said the airport must reduce charges annually by 5 percent. Moreover, the duty-free concession ends in July 1999 leaving a £30m annual shortfall. So the dividend has been revised. It will be nothing.

Expenses of the Week

CONGRATULATIONS to Nan Kirsen, Lib Dem leader of North Somerset council, who received nearly £30,000 expenses in 1996-97, thought to be the highest in Britain.

The council will not publicise details of the expenses; only how much she received *after* tax. While this is being challenged — the council may be reported to the ombudsman for maladministration — staff have been told that if the officer who first leaked the info won't own up, everyone will suffer. Yup: the Lib Dems not only believe in the responsible redistribution of public money but in open government, too.

Conflict of Interest of the Week

THE Lib Dems who run Bournemouth are very picky: at election time candidates are warned that if they are "contracted by the council" they can't "stand for the council".

But not so Adrian Fudge, finance chairman and deputy leader who is also a director of a building company, Tess Construction, which has been tendering for and winning council contracts. Fudge always declares an interest when his committees deal with his own company, but opponents still say he's a hypocrite.

Murkeyside

FOLLOWING his successful libel action against Lord Gnome in 1995, things haven't gone well for Murkeyside nightclub owner Henry Williams.

Last year we reported the unplanned extension of his hols in France when he was arrested on an outstanding warrant concerning drug smuggling. He was released after five weeks of *le porridge* and the case dropped. But ever since his club in Huyton has had problems.

Knowsley council reviewed its licence renewal every three months; locals didn't like the noise; and police were worried by violent incidents inside and outside the club. Williams changed the name, but Knowsley still closed it on 21 April, since when two appeals have failed. Its demise was assured in September when it burned down in "suspicious" circumstances.

The Things They Say

AS leader of Islington, Margaret Hodge promised that the council would pursue those who had not paid poll tax "to the end of the earth and the end of time".

Hence the London borough has just written off £4m owed to it. Biggest winners are the 50,000 who ignored parking fines. Some 500 tenants who moved without telling the council are also having £750,000 rent arrears "written off" — and 500 poll tax defaulters are having debts buried too.

Glasgow

SOUTH Balornock, the "Bosnia of Scotland", is arguably the worst council estate in Britain. But when Labour housing bosses spent £1,200,000 refurbishing 172 flats there eight years ago, they claimed it would be "a huge success as well as a housing showpiece". So far the "showpiece" has seen:

- Housing officials threatened and shot at with high-powered air rifles.
- Fire equipment stolen and firefighters threatened. (They are now escorted into the "war zone" by police.)
- An award-winning children's playground, and a large number of houses, razed then demolished by teenagers high on drugs.

"New" Labour won't admit it boobed or failed to initiate security measures. So taxpayers, already facing a 30 percent rise, will have to find £2m for capital spending and demolition costs.

Pseuds Corner

52 Pick-Up

August Kleinzahler

Luminoso e dolce	Woonsocket
Suzerainty	Lally-column
Impetigo	Gutta-percha
Colourless green	
ideas sleep furiously	Galaxy Giveaway Girl
Titrate	Coffered
Spinners&darners	Feminine intensive
Farallons	Epicanthus
Dag	A cup of tea, a Bex, and a good lie down
Frottage	Lawyer Milloy
Slow loris	Stuka
Gating	Portage
A bit of the other	Columbarium
Cuisse-de-nymphe	Irwin Corey
Chamfer	Melisma
Amber, civet and musk cods	
	Fest und Locker
Wahoo McDaniel	Korsakoff Syndrome
Chlamydia	Ocarina
Mortised-and-tenoned	Fatwa
Huitzilopochtli	Quoi d'autre
A bit of rough	Guelph
Chalumeaux	Chopsaki
Dingleberry	Hibiscus
Esculent	Rhinoplasty
Wing-nut	Ashes hauled
Sforzato	Dweeb
Ten dwarves took turns doing headstands on the carpet	
	Good night, Mrs Calabash

Poem from London Review of Books

Older than the river the sea-wind
Brings from West or South
The chilled and frothy bumpers that refresh
Dartmoor's granite mouth.

Older than mankind, the river swallows
The tale it has to tell.
Every bubble on it stares in envy
At Gidleigh Park Hotel.

"How lucky O how wise you people are"
Whisper the jostling bubbles,
"Who knows just where to pause, and rest your dreams,
And raise above your troubles

Such mouthfuls — for one taste the wildest river
Would wash dish, glass and cutlery forever."

TED HUGHES, Poet Laureate
Gidleigh Park Brochure

CONTRIBUTORS: Philip Conford, John Campbell.

£10 paid for entries

YOBS
HUSBAND
...YOURE THROUGH TO DAVID MELLOR ON 5 LIVE
'Ello David, ta for stickin' up for us in Italy
MY PLEASURE. ITS SO UNFAIR THAT ALL ENGLISH FANS ARE BRANDED YOBS TELL ME WHERE ARE YOU CALLING FROM?
Your place. Weve just broken in

Letters

Fore and against

Sir,

Your medical correspondent M.D. seems to have accepted at face value the claims of the small but vocal American anti-circumcision lobby (Dubious Operations Number 1: Male Circumcision; EYE *935).*

I accept that some doctors misdiagnose a non-retractile foreskin (which is normal in infancy) as phimosis but suspect that this error is more likely to occur in the United States where routine infant circumcision (RIC) is the norm and parents and doctors alike are unfamiliar with the uncircumcised male anatomy. It is not a pertinent argument in the UK.

However, as a paediatrician who has worked in the US, I do believe that there are benefits to RIC which should not be dismissed out of hand. There is robust data in the States to suggest that boys circumcised in infancy experience one-sixth as many urinary tract infections (UTIs) as their uncircumcised peers, while in adulthood the incidence of most STDs is 50-75 percent lower in the circumcised population. Finally, surveys of women's sexual preferences show a substantial majority favouring circumcised men on grounds of aesthetics, cleanliness, smell and more prolonged penetration.

M.D. claims that the absence of anaesthesia in infant circumcision is "barbaric". If this is his sincerely held view then he is mistaken: I have performed several hundred circumcisions in both the UK and America and it has been my experience that if the child is settled or asleep before the procedure begins then he is likely to remain so throughout, with no evidence of discomfort or pain. The nervous system is not well developed at the typical age for circumcision of 48 hours and in any case the amount of skin removed from an infant is not great.

The benefits of circumcision I believe are considerable; its disbenefits are negligible.

Yours faithfully,
KAREN WILLETTS (DR),
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

Cut and thrust

Sir,

In his denigratory Doing The Rounds on male circumcision M.D. appears to be ignorant of the main argument in its favour: the resultant lessening in sensitivity of the glans penis, by postponing the male orgasm, vastly increases the satisfaction of the female. In fact, M.D. seems to be ignorant of the existence of sexual intercourse.

Yours faithfully,
DR J.P. SCRIVENER,
Bognor Regis, W. Sussex.

No speech impediment

Sir,

I made no mention of the media in my speech at the wedding of my daughter and your assertion that I did is a lie. Shame on you for seeking to involve my daughter in your attempts to defame me.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL COLE,
London SW7.

Waterhouse Inquiry

Sir,

This letter will probably earn me a torrent of abuse from both you and your readers.

I refer to your coverage of the Waterhouse child abuse inquiry. Like you, I am unhappy with Alison Taylor's treatment and many other aspects of this matter. However, Sir Ronald Waterhouse **is** *justified in affording those "even remotely accused of abuse" anonymity.*

Ten years ago I was accused of abusing a child. The fact that I was exonerated in court (and subsequently received a letter of apology from the parents who made the allegation) made little difference. I had of course been named in the local media and, even after I was acquitted, there were still those who assumed I was guilty. After enduring six months of increasingly threatening phone calls, I was forced to leave a community I had lived in for 35 years.

Child abuse, like rape, is an appalling crime that fully deserves the social stigma attached to it. However, the fact that the media can name the accused **before** *he is found guilty can have devastating consequences when, on occasion, the man is actually innocent. Frankly, if the allegations being investigated in the Waterhouse inquiry are proved true, then those involved deserve to have their names plastered on the front page of every newspaper in the country. But surely, even for these men, justice must take its turn.*

Yours sincerely,
J. MICHAELIDES,
Jersey, Channel Islands.

Tablets of stone

Sir,

As Paul Foot asks, why do we still have dangerous-in-overdose paracetamol and not its possible, but not marketed, safe form?

As a minister, I've seen the horrors of paracetamol overdose. Take, for example, "Julie", aged 15, whose boyfriend dumped her one Friday afternoon.

That evening she swallowed every paracetamol in the family medicine chest and went to bed, expecting to die in her sleep.

Instead, in the early hours she awoke, was violently sick, and went back to sleep, still expecting to die. She woke again, felt dreadful, realised she would live, and was glad "it hadn't worked". We know this from her diary.

Alas, Julie was wrong. She didn't know, because our society does not talk about, the **kind** *of death paracetamol brings (***unnecessary** *death — a safe form of paracetamol exists).*

Julie's health worsened all Saturday. When her mother went to work at teatime, a friend came to stay, and called the ambulance when Julie fell in convulsions. Julie's brain was so swollen it had nearly ripped away from the brain stem.

At hospital, doctors told the family Julie's brain was dead except for automatic functions (heartbeat, breathing). But she still seemed alive so they waited in cruel, doomed hope. Julie could only be declared dead when her brain monitor had a flat line. The family were simply waiting, there's no easy way to say this, for Julie's brain to rot. For 13 agonising days. The intensive care nurse begged: "Tell anyone with teenagers, for God's sake, no paracetamol."

Why does this **still** *go on?*

Sincerely,
THE REV. DR. JUDITH A. WALKER-RIGGS,
Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, London NW3.

Island hopping

Sir,

Sadly Frances Shand-Kydd is not a resident of Iona as EYE *934 suggested. She is still living where she has for the last few years on the Isle of Seil, a bit further down the coast near Oban.*

Yours sincerely,
RUSSELL BROWN,
Via email.

Questionable behaviour

Sir,

*I was much moved by our majestic OBN entry relating to Martin Amis (*EYE *935). However, it raised an important question. When the unfortunate "bloke" realised that he was "never going to be Martin Amis" did he mean: a) that he was only capable of producing beautifully written, profound prose; or b) that he would never be able to flog a pile of remaindered rubbish for half a million pounds?*

I think we should be informed.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD CHALLONER,
London WC1.

House beautiful

Sir,

*Knowing your organ's fine tradition of attacking the neglect or vandalism of architectural nooks and corners, your treatment of the refurbishment of the reception area at Broadcasting House (*EYE *934) is disappointing.*

Broadcasting House is a Grade II listed building, and its reception has not been revamped for 16 years. In its 75th year, the BBC is restoring the area to its original 1930s grandeur, enhancing its many outstanding architectural features, with the approval of English Heritage and the City of Westminster.

Far from becoming a "luxury office block", Broadcasting House will retain its place as the headquarters of the BBC and the heart of our 75-year-old mission to bring quality programmes to the public — it is the home of British radio, and will continue to house broadcasting and broadcasters.

Yours faithfully,
COLIN BROWNE,
Director of Corporate Affairs, BBC.

"When shall we three cook meat again?"

I-SPY *Worthing*

Submitted by Mike Crisp. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Warming warning

Sir,

The statement that "more nuclear power is needed to enable her to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from coal and gas fired power stations" (EYE *935, Nukes & Nukemen), is quite wrong and global warming resulting from increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is by no means the most serious effect. However, I can assure you that on both these points you will get absolutely no response from any politician save the statement that the Brits will do nothing effective as long as the Yanks refuse to play.*

Yours faithfully,
D.S. ROBERTSON,
Malvern, Worcs.

Caught in the act

Sir,

Following your notable publication of opinion on both sides in the Diana debate, perhaps you might, in the same praiseworthy spirit of even-handedness and balance, publish the occasional counterblast to the "Luvvies" feature, in which you highlight thespians' own more critical views of their craft.

In today's EVENING STANDARD *the Londoner's Diary quotes Mr Brad Pitt thus: "I'm a ****ing actor. They hand me a script. I'm here for entertainment, basically. I'm a grown-up who puts on makeup." Such refreshing candour deserves a place in your columns, perhaps under the title "Reelies", since Mr Pitt is, like most of his prominent colleagues, an actor on film or video.*

Yours,
JACK LEE,
Via email.

Sitting target

Sir,

You tell us that Anthony Julius, the senior partner in the money-making legal firm Mishcon de Reya, had firsthand experience of "appalling avarice... in the office of one of the eighties' plutocrats — one of the most oversized of them". You imply, quite rightly, that this "sensitive solicitor" sat docilely in Robert Maxwell's offices for money.

But doesn't all this apply equally to the rancorous misanthrope you've given a double-page spread to in each of your issues — **Paul Foot***?*

Yours obediently,
J.L.A. HARTLEY,
London W8.

Puff adder

Sir,

I notice that one of your staff gave Yvonne Roberts five inches of your esteemed organ to puff her latest book. Are they by any chance related? I think you should be told.

Yours faithfully,
CHRIS WALLIS,
Marple.

Girl power

Sir,

Yvonne Roberts writes (Letters, 17 October) "...a single woman can give herself anything a husband once provided — income, status, home". Since this implies that the only motives for a woman to enter a relationship are greed and snobbery, doesn't this make Ms Roberts a misogynist?

Yours faithfully,
CLIVE MATHER,
Meersbrook, Sheffield.

Point taken

Sir,

The OBSERVER *page 18 (19 Oct): "Danger bullet loaded with laser flash of blinding light" slams the sale of laser key rings which can damage eyesight.*

Page 5 of INNOVATIONS, *the catalogue of useless gadgets, which accompanies the* OBSERVER: *"Laser power on your keyring" advertises a "powerful laser" for £29.95.*

Oh! And by the by, I also deplore your constant attacks on the OBSERVER *for hypocrisy.*

Yours sincerely,
MIKE MITCHELL,
Failsworth, Manchester.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Well, 'if' is a big word in Formula One — 'if' is Formula One spelt backwards..."
MURRAY WALKER, ITV
(Everyone)

"We've had to beg, steal and borrow computers."
Chief Constable, Notts Constabulary
(P.A. Blackham)

"Yes, they've come out with all cylinders flying, Peter."
LUTHER BLISSETT, Channel 4
(Ralph Barnett)

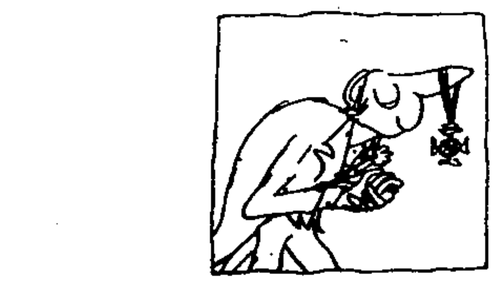
"...defeated but victorious."
Golf commentator, Sky TV
(P. Higgins)

"Further Flight seems to get better and better, although he's not as good as he was."
DEREK THOMPSON, C4
(Mike Robinson)

Lady presenter: *Manchester United lost twice to Juventus last season. What do you think Alex Ferguson learned from that?*

Mark Lawrenson: *That his team lost both games.*

BBC1
(Patrick Newman)



SPECIAL

Long Live our Adept Amir of Qatar
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani

Wish you Happy and Healthy return
May Allah take affliction out of you.

We pray for your fast recovery
For all our life as amor-patriae
Begin to joie-de vivre and blithesome
God bestows blessings on you Highness

You have sown the seeds sagaciously
Of truth, purity & integrity and
The harvest will be abundant ecstasy
And Peace on you and all the members Sire

By your coming dusk withers
And effulgency reappears
Greetings Greetings Greetings
Welcome Welcome Welcome.

M. Kanjani
(Poem in Gulf Times to commemorate the safe return of the Emir of Qatar from his kidney transplant operation in the States.)

CONTRIBUTOR: Anon.

Postcard from **Disneyland**

from Our Own Correspondent

DISNEY's latest offering *Hercules* has been released in UK cinemas with impeccable timing: its merchandising spin-offs (t-shirts, toys, games, etc) will be in the shops just in time to fill millions of Christmas stockings.

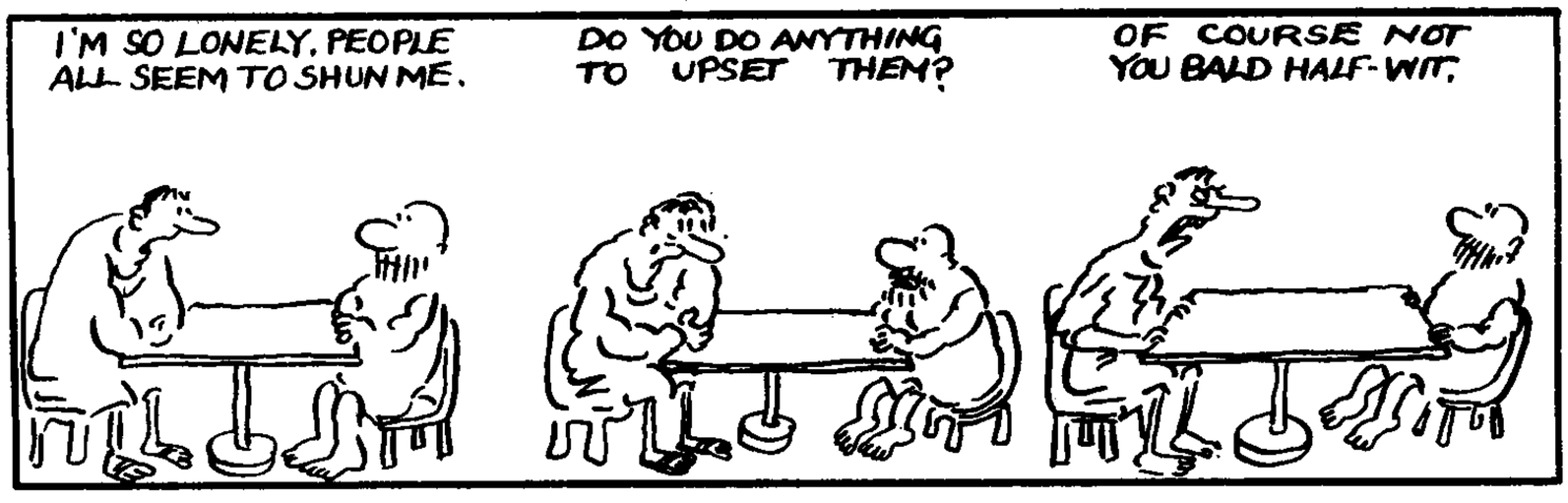
Meanwhile a World Development Movement report reveals that while Disney has spent $35m on marketing *Hercules* in the US alone, factories producing Disney clothing in Haiti are keeping workers' wages down to the lowest legally allowed level, refusing them sickness and maternity leave and forcing them to do overtime for very little extra pay.

Haitian women sewing Disney t-shirts earn 17p an hour. In one factory there are only three toilets (two of which are blocked) for 250 workers. When a man complained that the water tank was dirty and a dead frog had been found in it he was fired.

In early 1997, following protests at shareholder meetings, Disney said it had adopted a code of conduct on working conditions that would apply to all manufacturers (including Haitian sub-contractors). The Haitian workers have yet to benefit.

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



FUNNY OLD WORLD

o "We've been after Costantino for over a year in connection with several business swindles," a police spokesman told a crowded press conference in Naples, "but we had no idea he'd been posing as a monk. He's posed as an aristocrat, a banker, and a gynaecologist in the past, but this is the first time he's adopted a religious disguise.

"It seems that he entered a monastery on the outskirts of town last year, saying he'd been sent there from Palermo. The other monks were surprised when he immediately started receiving unorthodox magazines from Denmark, and kitting his monk's cell out with a hi-fi, colour television, and a drinks cabinet, but they believe in tolerance, so they said nothing. Besides, they knew he was Sicilian, so it didn't seem all that unusual. He even talked them into trusting him with their valuables, which are now missing, and persuaded them to let him handle the monastery's bank account, which is now fifty million lire in debt. Young boys were seen leaving his cell in the early hours of the morning, but it wasn't until he began inviting women round for the night, and making so much noise that matins was disrupted, that the monks finally became suspicious enough to contact the police." *(Victoria News Times-Colonist, 18/6/97. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

—o—

o "I think it's a sort of Romeo and Juliet gone wrong," manager Andrej Wisniewski told Polish reporters outside his hotel in Starochowice. "The guests swear that their names are Beata and Kamil, and that they're both seventeen. Apparently they wanted to get married but their parents forbade it. So they decided to rent a room here, swallow poison, and die in each other's arms.

"But it seems that the chemist must have suspected what they were up to when they asked for 'the strongest poison in the shop', so he sold them a purgative instead. Beata and Kamil took the bottle to their hotel room, one of our economy rooms with no bathroom. Once inside, they locked the door, threw the key out of the window, then each drank half of the bottle and prepared to die. The results were devastating. They were in there for three days before they dared call for help. The room stinks, the walls and the bedclothes are caked with shit, even the ceiling is splattered. You can't see through the windows for undigested vegetables. We've had to burn the mattress and send for the fumigators. It needs a deep clean. And Kamil tells me he's so disgusted by Beata now that he's broken off the engagement." *(Kaleidoscope [in-flight magazine of Lot Polish Airlines], September 1997. Spotter: Romuald E. J. Rudzki)*

—o—

o *"It was intended as an ice-breaker, letting kids know that we know what's going on in the world," Scott Martin told an emergency meeting of governors at the Third National High School in Dallas, Texas. "We call it 'urban mathematics', using examples from everyday life instead of old-fashioned x and y."*

Harris and five of his teaching colleagues were suspended for thirty days after setting their students a mathematics paper (entitled 'City of Los Angeles High School Math Proficiency Exam') which included the following questions:

"1. Johnny has an AK-47 with an 80-round clip. If he misses 6 out of 10 shots and shoots 13 times at each drive-by shooting, how many drive-by shootings can he attempt before he has to reload?

"2. Rufus is pimping for three girls. If the price is $65 for each trick, how many tricks will each girl have to turn so Rufus can pay for his $800-per-day crack habit?

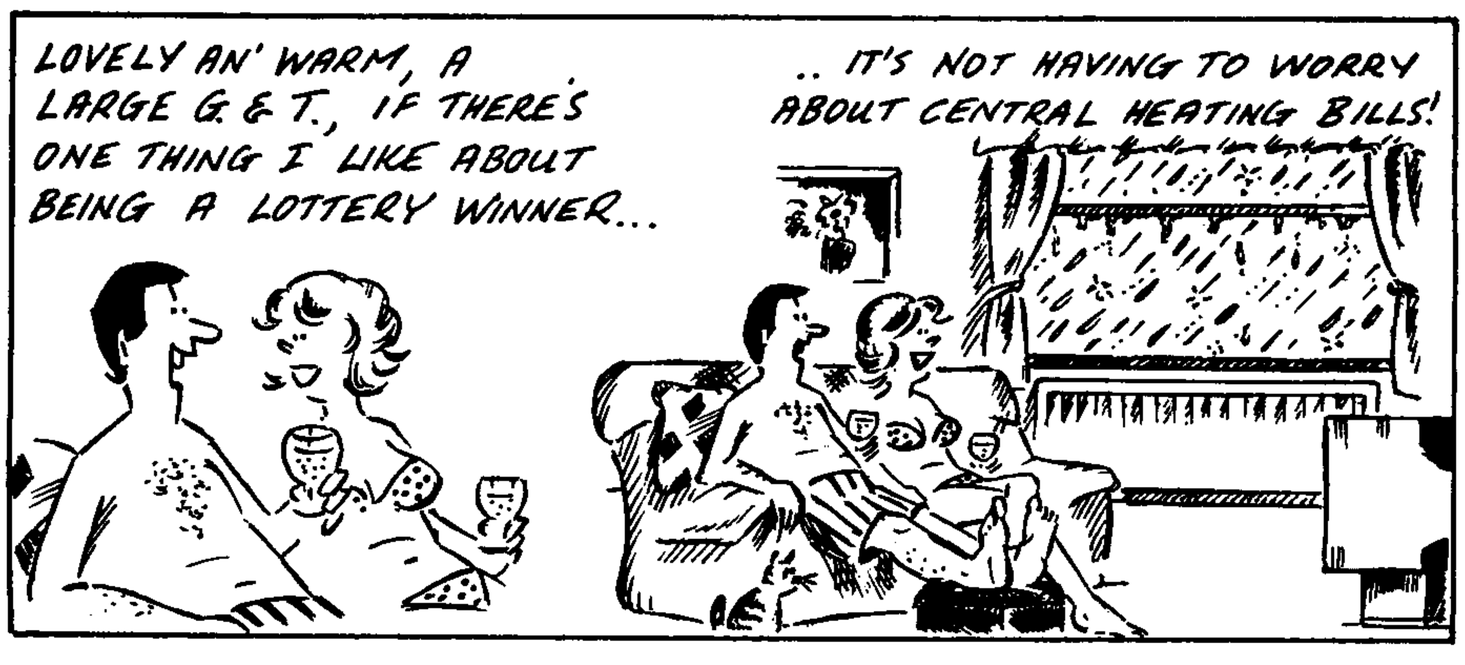
"3. Hector has knocked up six girls in his gang. There are 27 girls in the gang. What percentage of the girls in the gang has Hector knocked up?

"4. Jerome wants to cut his 168gm of heroin to make 20% more profit. How many gms of cut will he need?" (South China Morning Post International Weekly, 30/8/97. Spotter: Julian Wood)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

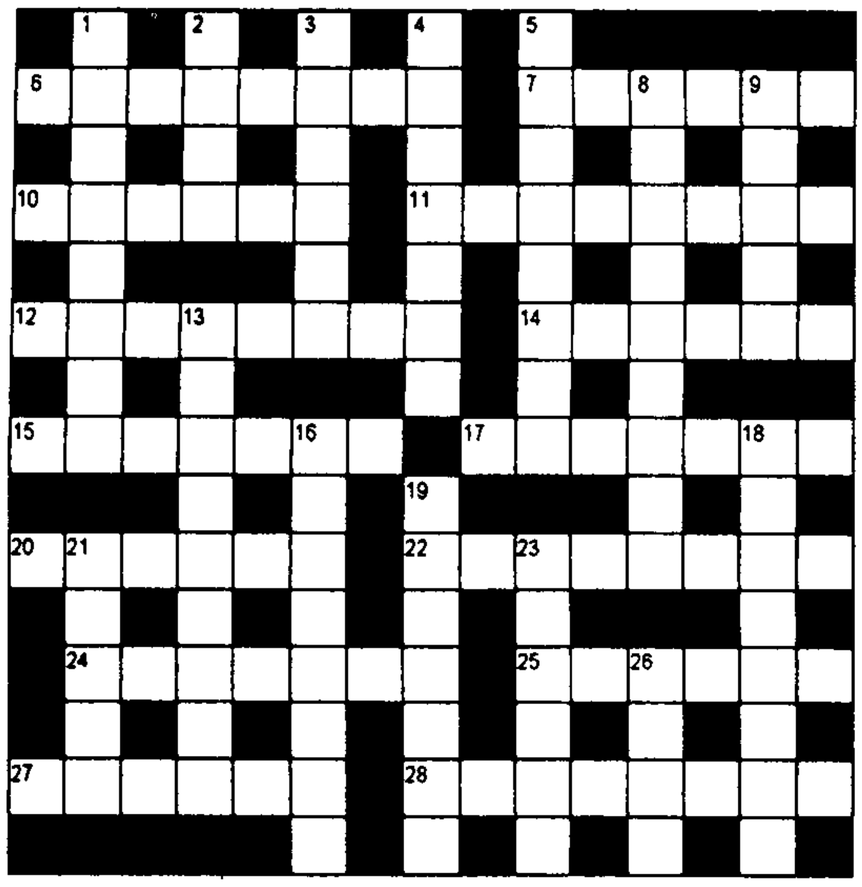
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


LOVELY AN' WARM, A LARGE G & T., IF THERE'S ONE THING I LIKE ABOUT BEING A LOTTERY WINNER...
.. IT'S NOT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT CENTRAL HEATING BILLS!

EYE CROSSWORD 91

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

6/18 Sufficiently attractive to make a bloke stiff? (4,4,8)
7 Exclamation: "Pam's bust may be seen in the *Eye*!" (3,3)
10 Beast (of Bolsover?) unites inner self with Labour leader (6)
11 Iron skirt to get a good bloke? Not her! (8)
12 Like Brenda's mother: a bit of a joke to have in charge (8)
14 Fast hack tried to cut corporation down to size (6)
15 Gore-like record of bureaucracy (3,4)
17/16 Manipulation of members is their business (7,8)
20 First item on the programme is topless Brenda (6)
22 The result of some clot's stupid carry-on about nothing (8)
24 Couple figure on getting a bit... (7)
25 ... — shagged all right with no interruption in the sack (6)
27 Danish ready to make two kings a single king (6)
28 Tabloid, losing head, cosies up to Labour leader — terrible, criminal, in fact (8)

DOWN

1 Interest extended on Access — a political scandal! (8)
2 Member's erection packed with top grade meat (4)
3 Fanatic ruined late *Oz*'s circulation (6)
4 Somewhat bigoted if I censor an erection? (7)
5 Where Maxwell went overboard, putting one over key communicators (3,5)
8 (see 21)
9 Prominent Ulster Unionist without extremes — the way to form a Church-approved Union? (5)
13 Someone on record as an ardent admirer of Di gives Ben something to go on (5,4)
16 (see 17)
18 (see 6)
19 To make a hash of things gets No.10 possibly elated (5,2)
21/8 Favourite to Brenda and African leader almost takes issue with one who failed to secure his seat (5,9)
23 Mob topless contemporary novelist (6)
26 All the main points distorted as printed in the papers? (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 07.11.97. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 90

Winner: STEVE GILL

ACROSS: 8 Eunuch 9 Guineas 10/18 Whispering campaign 11 Euro 12 Duchess 14 Ageist 15 Spartan 17 Verdict 20 Consul 22 Optimum 24 Sham 25 Anticlimax 27 Autocue 28 Effigy.

DOWN: 1 Hushed up 2 Guts 3 The Eye 4 Against 5 Disgrace 6 Referendum 7 Osiris 13 Chris Smith 16 Alliance 18 (see 10) 19 Footmen 21 On heat 23 Ticker 26 Iffy.

Daily Mail

The Paper You Can Trust

BLAIR LYNCHED BY CITY MEN

By Our Man In The City **Fred Needle**

THE PRIME Minister was lucky to escape with his life when he appeared on the floor of the Stock Exchange yesterday, according to an exclusive report by Daily Mail staff.

Angry dealers surrounded Tony Blair smiling with fury and began shouting: "Good old Tony, what are you doing for lunch?"

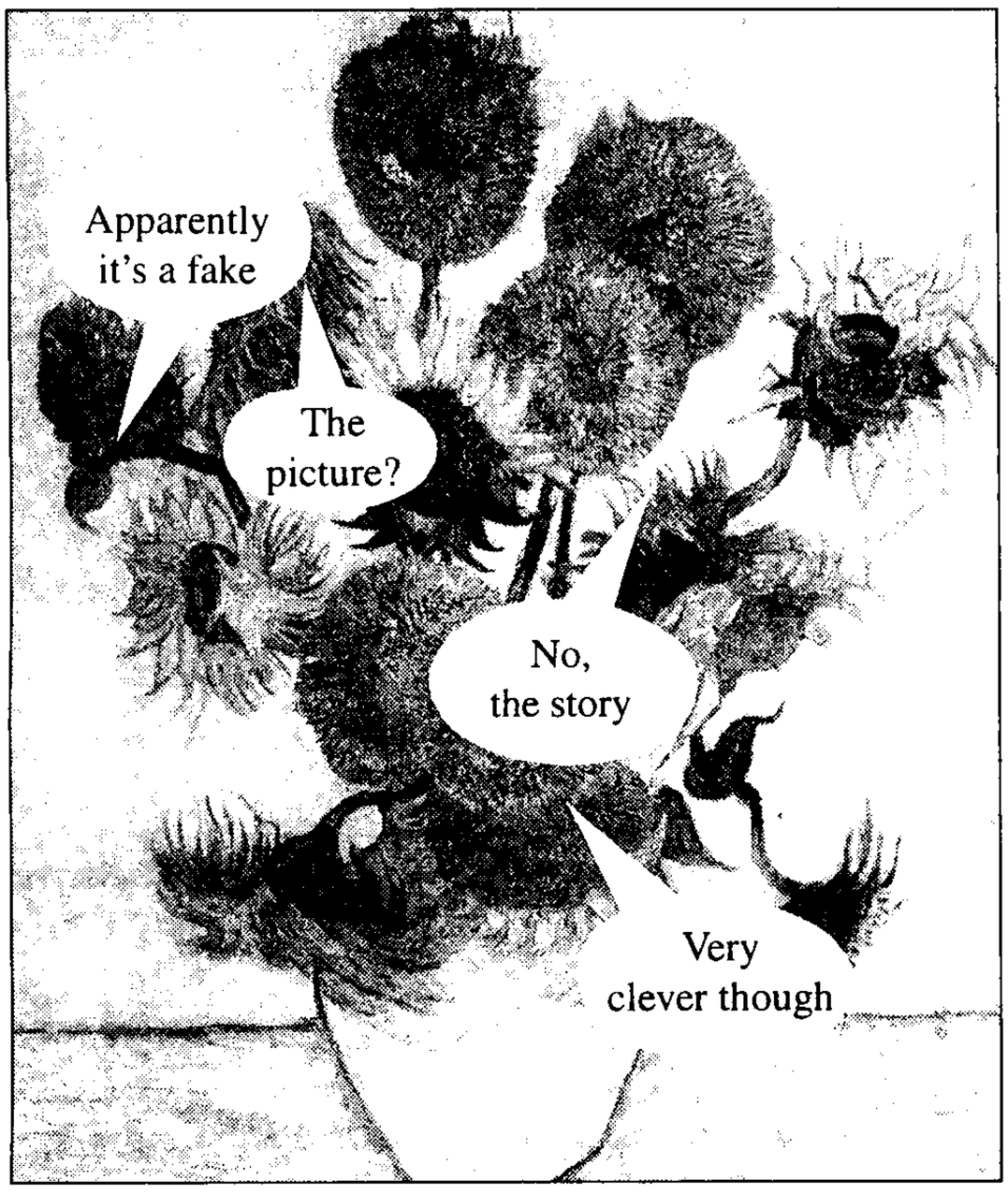
No wonder the Prime Minister apparently looked white as a sheet as he beat a hasty retreat after spending only two hours signing autographs.

Security men had their jobs cut out keeping murderous brokers from shaking Blair's hand and telling him they hoped he would be Prime Minister for many years to come.

Totally Untrue

It was one of the worst public relations disasters that the Daily Mail has ever made up *(shurely 'witnessed'? Ed)*. No wonder the honeymoon is over and Labour are totally finished.

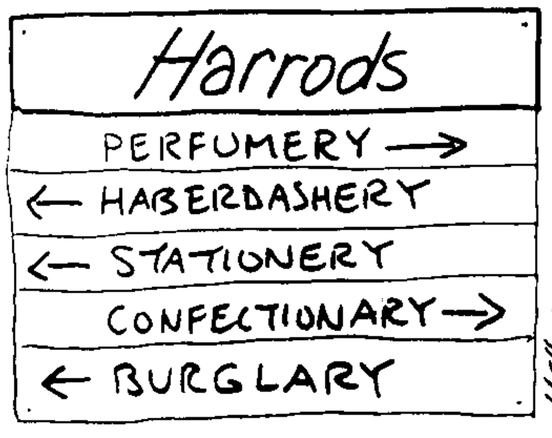
SUNFLOWER SHOCK



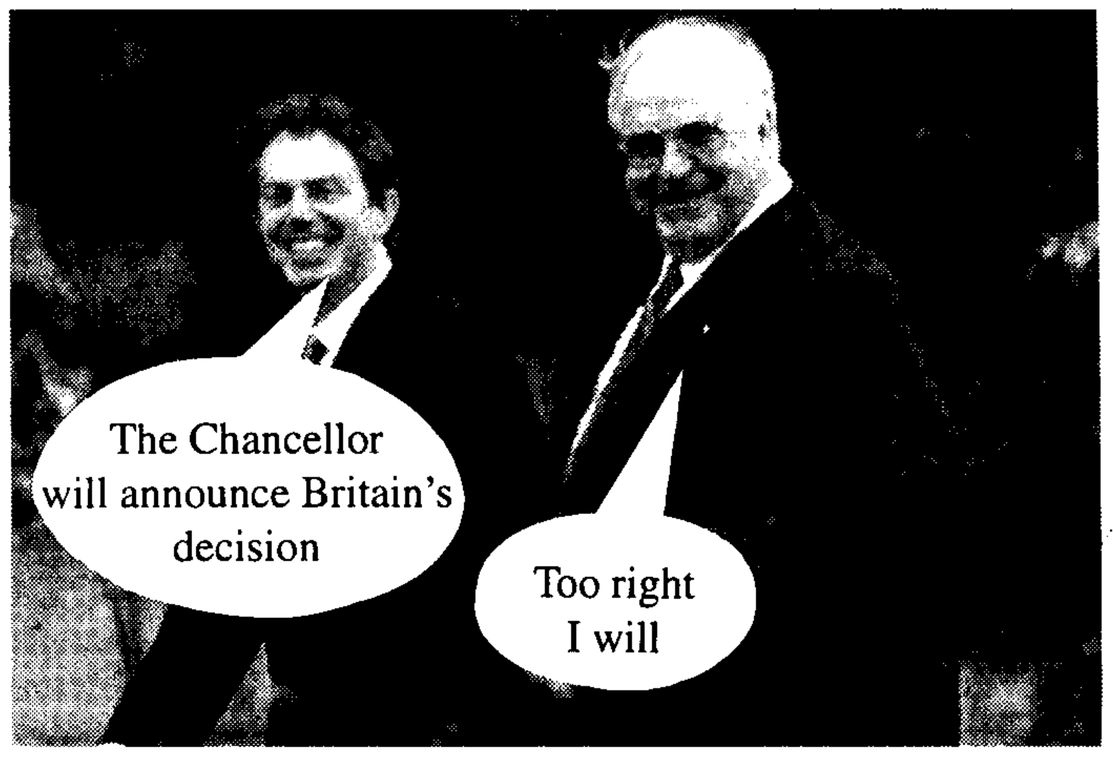
LATE NEWS

CHILD NOT MURDERED, RAPED OR MOLESTED SHOCK

IN AN astonishing piece of news, it was announced last night that no British child under the age of 10 had been assaulted for nearly five minutes and *(cont. p 94)*.



EMU LATEST



GLENDA SLAGG

Fleet Street's Waste of Spice!!!

SHED A TEAR for poor Jane Asher who's lost her job selling biscuits and cakes on the telly!?!! Jus' cos she ain't a teenager no more!?!! Well, Mister, that really takes the biscuit (geddit?!) Everyone knows she's still a cracker (geddit??!!) and you can't just fire someone for being too old can you!?!!! *(Yes. You're fired. Ed.)*

GOOD riddance to Jane Asher!? About time, too, ginger nut (Ged-dit??!) Two chocolate fingers to you!!?? Now you can spend more time hob-knobbing with cuddly hubby cartoon king Gerry!?!!! Crumbs!?! *(This is terrible. You're hired again. Ed.)*

THREE cheers for the gorgeous Gallagher Brothers who woke up boring old Radio One with their stream of drug-filled obscenities!?!!

But what's all the fuss about, Auntie?!

Surely what we all need is more of the Oasis boys a-fuggin' and a-druggin' on our trannies?!!! Not less!!

These two swearing swingers have really put Britain back on top of the obscenity charts!?!!!

Let's have your next single lads — All You Need Is Fuggin' Heroin!?!!

MICHAEL SCHUMACHER!?!! Aren'tchasickofhim??!! Typical German!?! As soon as he thinks he's lost the race he tries to murder his opponent?!!! But he got his come-uppance just like they did in 1914-1918, in 1939-45 and in 1966!? The World Cup, Mister, in case you forgot!!! Clear off to your bunker,

Fritz, take your crashed Kraut car with you *(It was a Ferrari, Ed.)* **and don't forget the cyanide pills!??**

That's my Formula One for getting rid of you!? (Geddit?!?)

HATS OFF to Mad Mike Schu-macher!? OK, so he tried to kill his opponent? So what?! I like a man who puts his foot on the throttle and doesn't care who he hits!! What a Villeneuve of the whingeing Frenchman *(He was a Canadian, Ed.)* to complain??! Jacques it in!!?! (Geddit?!)

HERE they are – Glenda's Novem-ber Bangers!

PIERS MERCHANT. You can come round and research the excesses of the British tabloids at my place any time!!??! And don't forget to bring your wife!?!

CLIFFORD WILLIAMS — The Randy Reverend to you, Mister!!??! It's his hornier-than-thou attitude that I like!! Geddit?!?!

EMEKA ANYAOKU, Commonwealth General Secretary. Crazy name, crazy guy!!?!

Byeeeeee!

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo again!

We've had beautiful autumn weather, haven't we? A real Indian summer (and that's not a joke about poor Mr Cook, whose holiday in India seems to have been a bit of a disaster!).

As you may have heard, this week at St Albion's, I played host to an ecumenical group from all over the Anglican world!

It was a very exciting get-together, and some of you will have recognised some old friends from our mission countries in the Third World!

There was Mr Mandela, Mr Mugabe, Mr Rawlings, Mr Moi who's been doing such good work in Kenya, and many other colourful figures in their tribal three-piece suits!

I had one special message for all our foreign visitors. And that was that they were welcome to the *modern* St Albion's! Modern, you see!

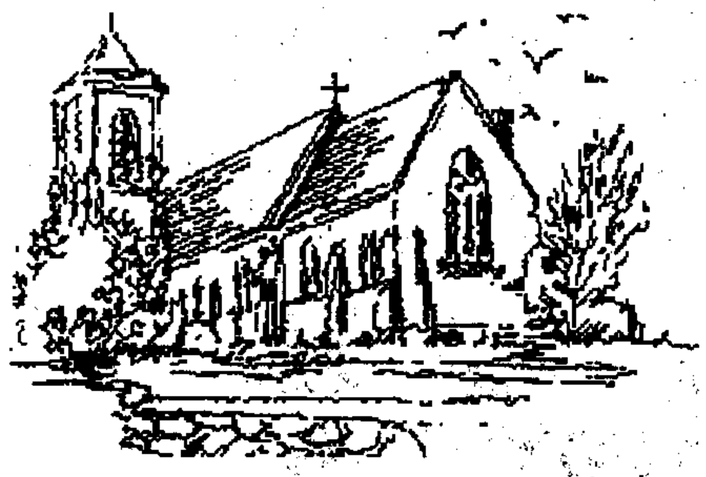
That's why, as soon as they arrived, I showed our new video in the church hall, introduced by Mr Thaw of the Amateur Dramatic Society, who some of you will remember in their last year's production of *Iolanthe*.

We've called our video *"St Albion's — The Pivotal Parish"*. And that's what we're saying — that our parish is pivotal, in a really pivotal way.

And that's not all. St Albion's is a vibrant parish too! That's why the subtitle of the video is *"The Vibrant Vicar"*, which is what I am trying to be!

I was so pleased that, during the coffee break in our opening seminar, no fewer than one of our Commonwealth friends came up to me and said, "Tony, what you're doing

Welcome! We have so much to learn from each other!



here in St Albion's is really pivotal and vibrant. Your approach can really guide us with our problems back home".

I think he was one of the Nigerians.

What everyone realised from our video is that in the last few months everything has changed at St Albion's!

They came, expecting to see just a lot of stuffy tradition, with old-fashioned ritual.

Instead, what St Albion's showed them was a young, vibrant community being really pivotal, with teenagers going trainspotting, kids surfing on the Internet and even a shot of me playing football on my holiday in Tuscany!

So, that's the message then! Remember the pop chorus that the youth choir sang at the end of the video:

"We must be vibrant and pivotal,
That's the modern way
We must be pivotal and vibrant
Each and every day."

(from the *New St Albion's Chorus Book For Today*, available from the coffee area on Sunday mornings).

Your friend, Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr Brown, our parish treasurer, who has had a very trying time in the last few days faced with the responsibility of the church accounts. Mr Brown has, of course, done sterling work (!), but it is no surprise that under such pressure he has found it all a little too much. It is no disrespect to Gordon, but I have decided to take over the books pro tem until he is completely recovered and able to do his job again. In the meantime, we all wish him to "take it easy" *(Luke 7, 15-17).*

TB

Talking Point

"Like everyone else last Sunday I put my clocks back. But then I thought, now Tony's in charge, we should be putting our clocks forward, shouldn't we?"

S. Cusack

A NOTE FROM THE CHURCHWARDEN, MR MANDELSON

I am sorry to say that not all church members have yet got the message about getting permission before talking about church business in public. Once again, it is some of our older members (four in particular) who do not seem to understand that things have changed since the bad old days when people said what they thought. If Mr Coates and his friends continue to behave in this unhelpful manner, then sadly they will no longer be welcome at any of our services. They only way to run an open, responsible, modern church is to do what Tony says.

PM

Thought For The Day

"If we say we have no spin, we deceive ourselves."

The Book of Common Blair

Gypsies Update

Of course we all feel every sympathy for the gypsies who have been camping at the back of the churchyard. But we had no alternative but to ask the police to move them on. They were not doing themselves any good by camping here, and it was in their best interests to go off to be homeless somewhere else. This is what Tony meant when he talked about compassion with a hard edge. (Good point! TB).

Jack Straw (Alderman)

YOUR LETTERS

Dear Tony,

I must protest. When you became our vicar you promised that you would stop them poisoning the rabbits in the churchyard.

But the poor little bunnies are still dying, poisoned by a vicious and

Yours faithfully
Mrs Anita Roddick.

The Editor reserves the right to shorten all letters due to reasons of space. A. Campbell, Editor.

• • • Focus Groups • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

There was a very successful meeting of the **Single Mothers' Union**, where Mrs Harman gave a most interesting talk on ***"Getting Single Mothers Back To Work"***. She told us that over 90 percent of single mothers had been given a chance of getting a job by being invited to the local Job Centre to talk over available career options with staff. The talk led to a good-humoured discussion. When one questioner asked the speaker how many women had actually found employment, the answer came "None so far, but we're still hoping!".

BRITISH FASHION WEEK TAKES EASTBOURNE BY STORM

by Our Political Staff **Philuppa Page**

THE SLEEPY seaside town of Eastbourne was yesterday transformed into the world's fashion capital, as super-models flew in from all over Britain to launch designer Willy Hague's new "Britsquit " Menswear Collection.

Said Hague: "I've gone for a sort of very 90s casual-but-compassionate feel. I'm calling it the 'washed-up' look".

Notably absent from the Eastbourne catwalk was outsize-model 34-stone "Nikki" Soames, who last night told fashion editors: "I haven't got time to ponce about by the seaside with this ghastly little man. I'm too busy having lunch in my club." William Hague is 11.

Stevie Dorrell goes "Woolly"

Al Clark in "Stupid Country"

Johnnie Deadwood in "Drip-Dry Vulcan"

Hague modelling own designer "Jacket-In"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Kenneth Wood, inventor of the "Kenwood" Mixer and the Reversible Toaster.

So. Farewell then
Ken Wood.

Inventor of the
Reversible
Toaster.

Reversible the of
Inventor
Wood Ken.

Then farewell
So.

E.J. Thribb, inventor of the Reversible Poem (½71)

DISNEY PRESENTS **THE NEW LABOURS OF BLAIRCULES**

BLAIRCULES has to prove himself a true hero so that he will join the immortals.

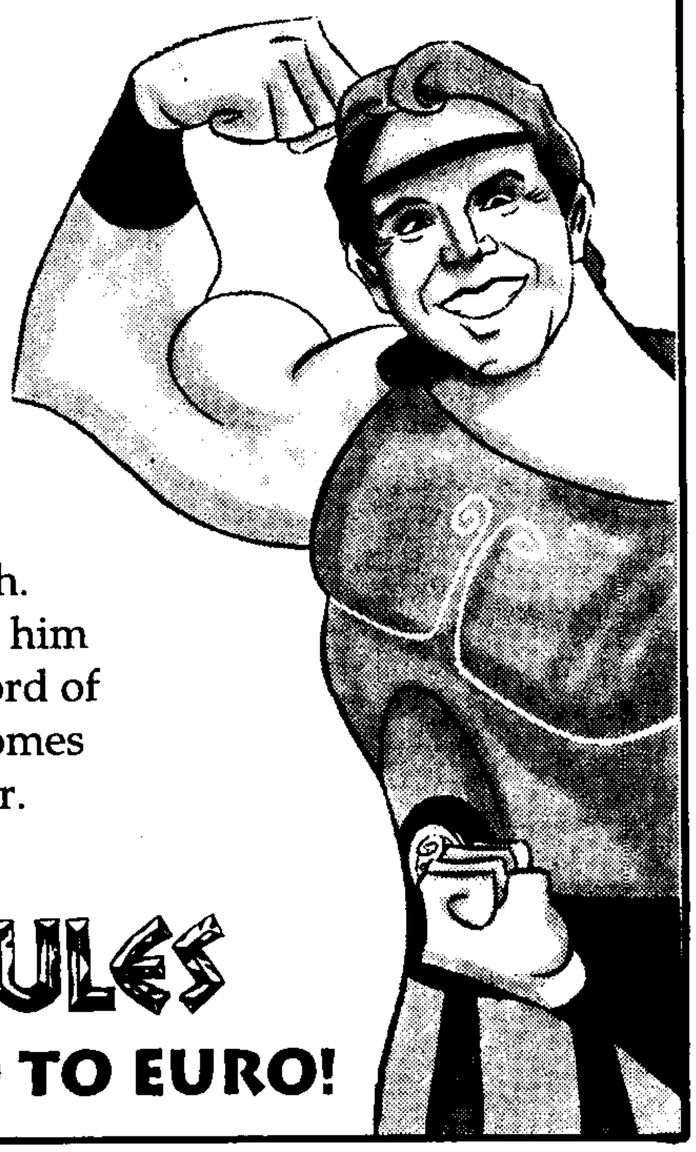
But he falls in love with Mag who unknown to him is in the power of the evil Lord of the Underworld (Rupo).

Meanwhile, his awesome tasks include:

- **Slaying the Bore of Prescott**
- **Cleaning up the League Tables**
- **Defeating the Many-Faced Haguera.** *(Rather an easy task this one.)*
- **Smashing the unions** *(surely 'Titans'? Ed.)*

But coached by his trusty friend Pete (half goat, half Mandelson), Blaircules conquers everything in his path.

Even Mag falls for him in the end and the Lord of the Underworld becomes his greatest supporter.



BLAIRCULES
FROM HERO TO EURO!

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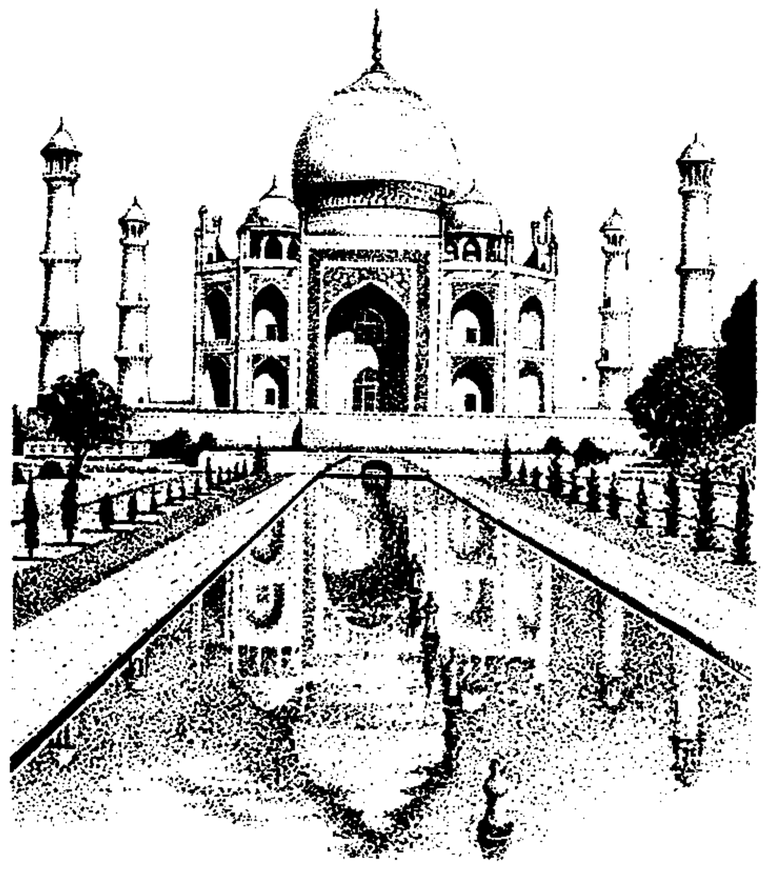

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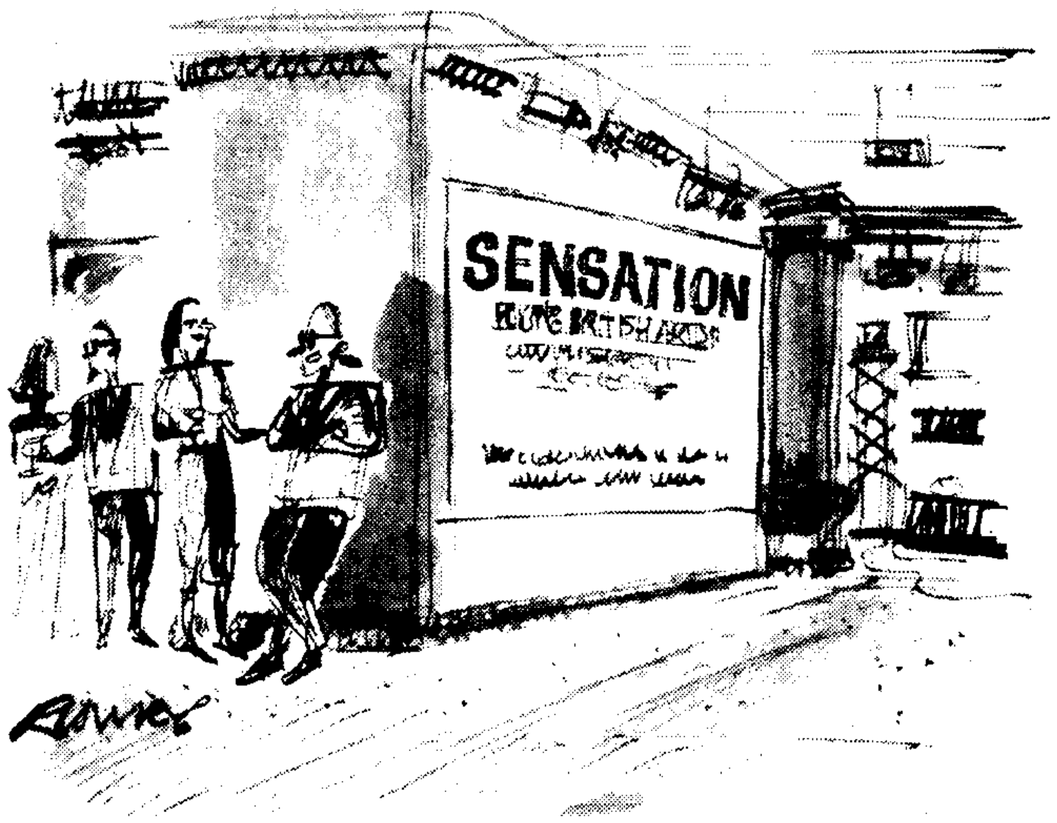
Robin Cook is a member of ABSOL, LOOTDIS, ASTA and FUCUP



"We want artistic immortality and we want it now"

BALTI HOUSE TO DROP KNEE ADVERT

by **Phil Space**

IN a shock move that has rocked the world of football to its foundations, the star of the Neasden Curry House and Balti Emporium has decided to drop its long-running cinema commercial featuring Ron Knee, the Neasden FC manager.

The commercial shows the Knee family sitting at the breakfast table enjoying a delicious Prawn Vindaloo Takeaway with Basmati Rice.

To the accompaniment of exotic sitar music, the dialogue, known by heart to generations of Neasden cinema-goers (Sid and Doris Bonkers) runs as follows:

Ron Knee: Mmmm. These prawns are yummy.

Ronnie Knee (*son*): Same here, dad.

Ronnette Knee (*daughter*): I don't know how you do it, Mum.

Sharon Knee (*wife*): Don't tell your Dad, but I got it sent round from the Star of Neasden Balti House and Curry Emporium, at 412, Tesco Road, only three minutes walk from this cinema. Last orders midnight.

Ron Knee (*doing thumbs up*): In my line, you've got to keep your eye on the Balti!

Glenn Hoddle

Last night, a spokesman for the Star of Neasden, Mr Vishnu Amrolliwallah, explained the shock decision to drop the Knee advert.

"It has come to our notice that Mr and Mrs Knee are no longer an item.

"Though this is very sad, we are a family Balti house selling family meals at affordable prices, and we cannot afford to be linked with a broken home."

Ron Knee is 59.

Yes! It's Britain's Newest Fanzine

BLAIRZONE

Euro-Nooz

Tone and the band are keeping the fans guessing about whether they are going to play Europe. Will it be 1999? or 2002? or never?

Breadhead Gordon "Gordy" Brown, Blairzone's Mr Moody, is certainly living up to his reputation as the silent one. 'Nuff not said! As the late, great Sir Paul MacLennon put it, "You say yes, I say no, You say hi, I say it's too early to commit ourselves to a longterm policy".

So are the ugly rumours true that lead singer Tone and tunesmith Gordy (Blairzone's ideas' man) are having creative differences over the band's direction?

No one knows. All Gordy is saying is that "If you can't sell out in Frankfurt, then you're a real nowhere man".

All Tone will say is that Gordy has gone "stark staring bankers"!

Either way, Gordy and Tone are mad for it! (Providing the conditions and timing are appropriate, obviously.)

Blairzone will be supported on the European Tour by top techno acts:

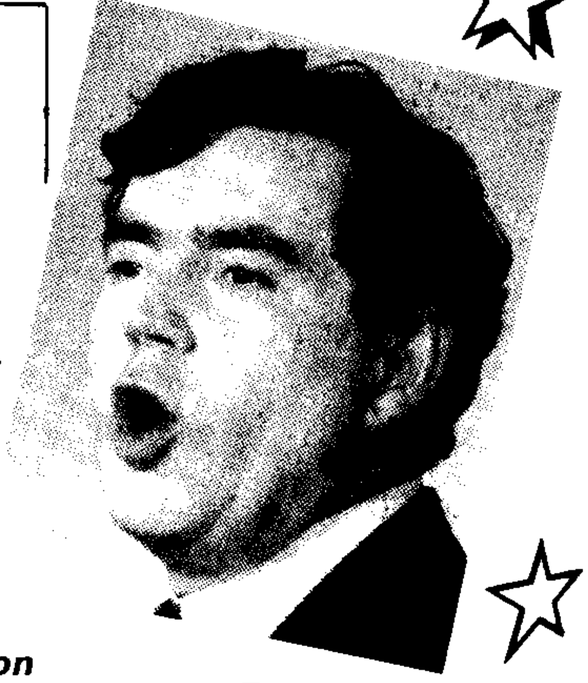
● Stealer's Whelan ● Stock, Market, Watercrash ● Simply In The Red ● UB40s ● Bye City Rollers ● The Skids.

Gordy's Playlist

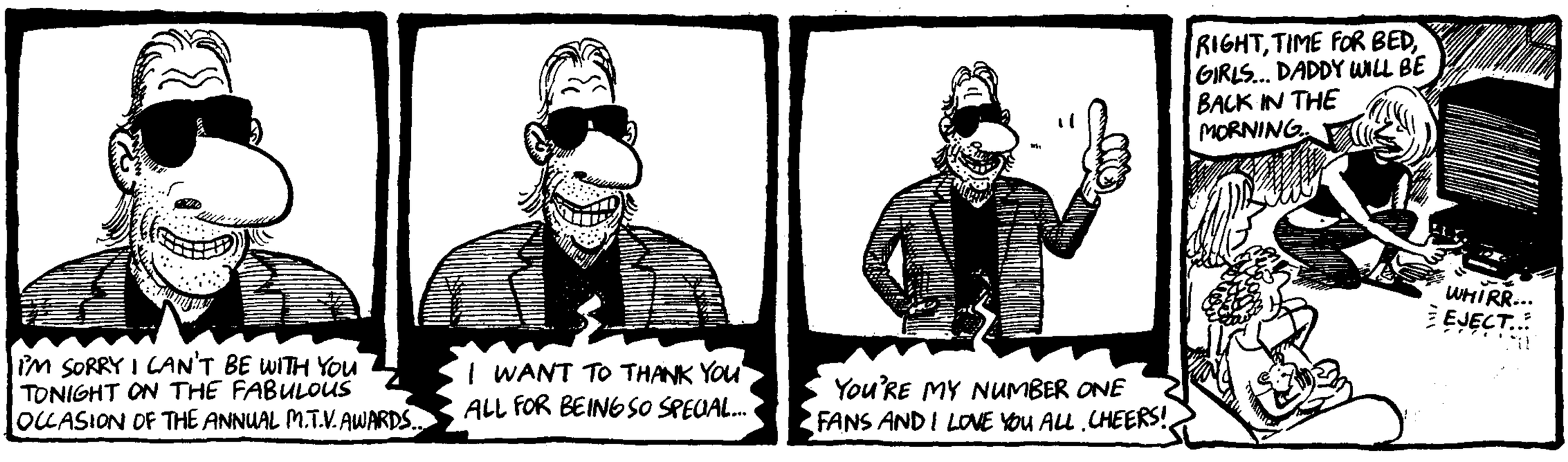
- ■ ***Golden Brown***
- □ *Pinstripe Wizard*
- ■ ***Brown Hat in the Ring***
- □ *Flash Gordon (Ooh Aah, He's the Saviour of the Universe)*

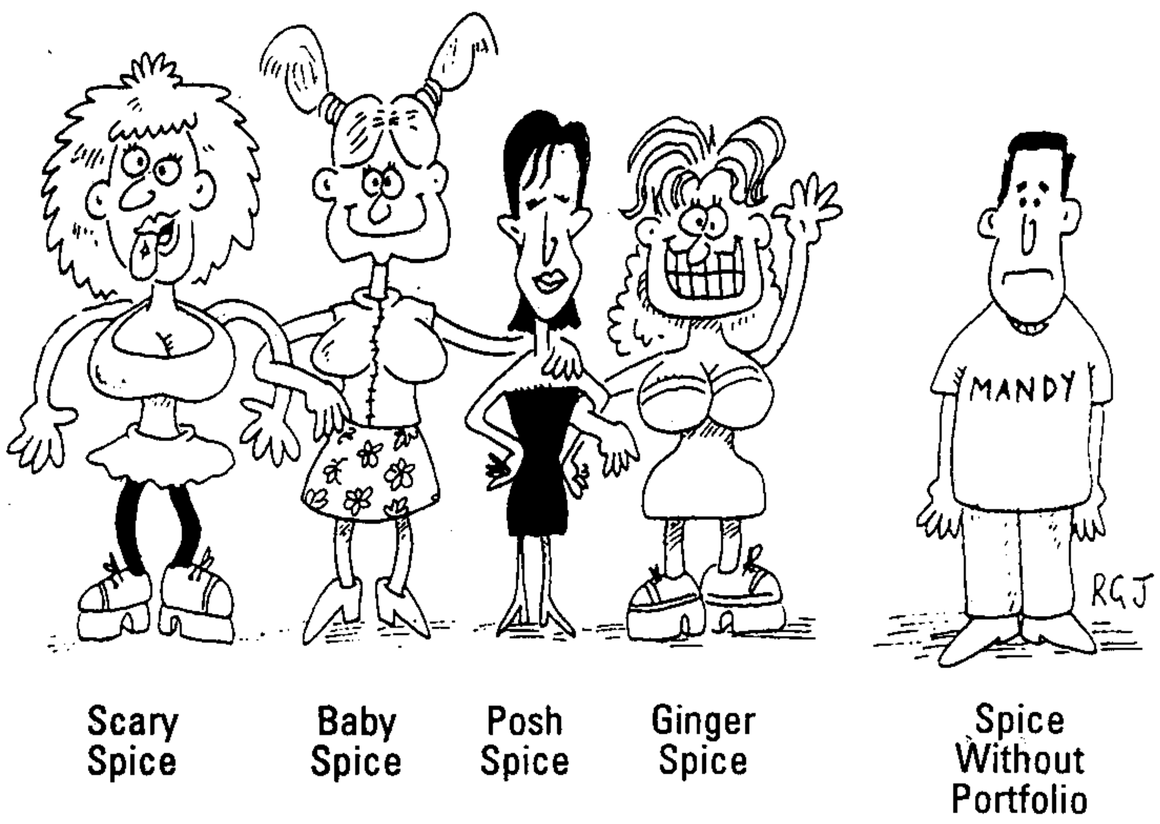
Tone's Playlist

Gordon is a Moron



Celeb


I'M SORRY I CAN'T BE WITH YOU TONIGHT ON THE FABULOUS OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL M.T.V. AWARDS..
I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING SO SPECIAL...
YOU'RE MY NUMBER ONE FANS AND I LOVE YOU ALL. CHEERS!
RIGHT, TIME FOR BED, GIRLS... DADDY WILL BE BACK IN THE MORNING..
WHIRR... EJECT...



Scary Spice | Baby Spice | Posh Spice | Ginger Spice | Spice Without Portfolio

'PASSIVE SMIRKING'

New danger says report

by Our Health Staff
Dr Thomas Utterfraud

IN AN astonishing new survey released last night, doctors claim that even people who do not smirk themselves could be seriously harmed by "passive smirking".

"Even being in the same room as Richard Branson is dangerous," says the report. "Branson may be opening a bank, posing in bed with Chris Evans or turning a Spice Girl upside down. But whatever he is doing his smirking habit can cause you immediate irritation and in the end it will get right up your nose."

The report concludes: "This may lead to nausea and even death." *(Cont. p.94)*.

The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No 94. Service For The Bedding Of Women

The Vicar (*for it is he*)**:** Dearly beloved (especially you in the second row with the hat), as the scripture saith, when two or three are gathered together in bed, there am I in the midst of you, having a good time.

All: Ooh, you are a one! (or it may be "cheeky!", or some such appropriate response).

Vicar: I fancy something on the organ.

Organist: I will pull out all the stops.

All: Hark at her!

(The organist will then play a quick fugue in three parts)

Vicar: Just a few notices. There will be a ladies' house group tomorrow night at Mrs Naughtie's, because her husband is away on business. I shall be leading the discussion on the Church's role in Uganda.

(Hymn: No. 94 from the S and M Hymn Book, "Abed With Me". *Followed by* Reading: The Women Taken In Adultery. *There will then be a laying on of hands by the Vicar, when he will lay his hands on any female member of the congregation under the age of 80)*

The Obscene Creed

Vicar: I believe in One Bed, and the Three Persons in It. Amen.

Dismissal

The Bishop: You're fired.

Harry Enfield's **Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath**.

24. New Father

"Isn't he AMAZING? I still can't believe it how utterly brilliant he is a miracle already sleeping almost through the night except for six feeds sometimes I do the nappies he didn't have a poo for two hours but the casualty department said this was normal sweet little fat legs I can't believe it we got it from Baby Gap two weeks ago & he's grown out of it already we only breast feed him & natural herbal remedies don't want to destroy his immune system terrible colic on Sunday we swear by infacol sudacream calpol Jane's sister's baby's one week older but hasn't smiled yet he first smiled eighteen days four hours & nine minutes ago we call him Maxy Waxy Pudding & Pie he looks so like Jane in some lights & me in others & my Dad in the bath & he's the spitting image of Jane's aunt I'm so tired — Oh God! He's woken up! JANE! JANE! HE'S CRYING CALL THE HOSPITAL!..."

A Poirot Mystery

THE CASE OF THE FUGGIN' EMERALDS

by Agatha Christie

"FIRST Floor — Magazines, Magazine Subscriptions and Bargain Magazines." The uniformed attendant in the Harrods lift pronounced his litany with obvious boredom as Hercule Poirot, the famous Belgian detective, was conveyed to the penthouse suite of the world-renowned department store.

"So, 'Astings," Poirot observed to his companion, "zis is ze famous 'Arrods where you can buy anyzing from an elephant to a..."

"...a conservative MP?" ventured his faithful assistant, Colonel Hastings, with a smile.

"Quite so, 'Astings," replied the legendary sleuth, contemplating his latest case with pleasurable anticipation.

As the lift doors closed behind them, the two men were greeted by a strangely bouffant-haired figure, dressed in an electric-pink shirt.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," he purred. "How very kind of you to come. My name is Michael Cole — you may have read some of my letters to the newspapers."

"Indeed, I 'ave, Monsieur. And most interesting zey were, too. I so much admire your... 'ow you say..."

"Honesty?" suggested the helpful factotum.

"...Non, monsieur, ze word I 'ad in mind was 'mendacité'."

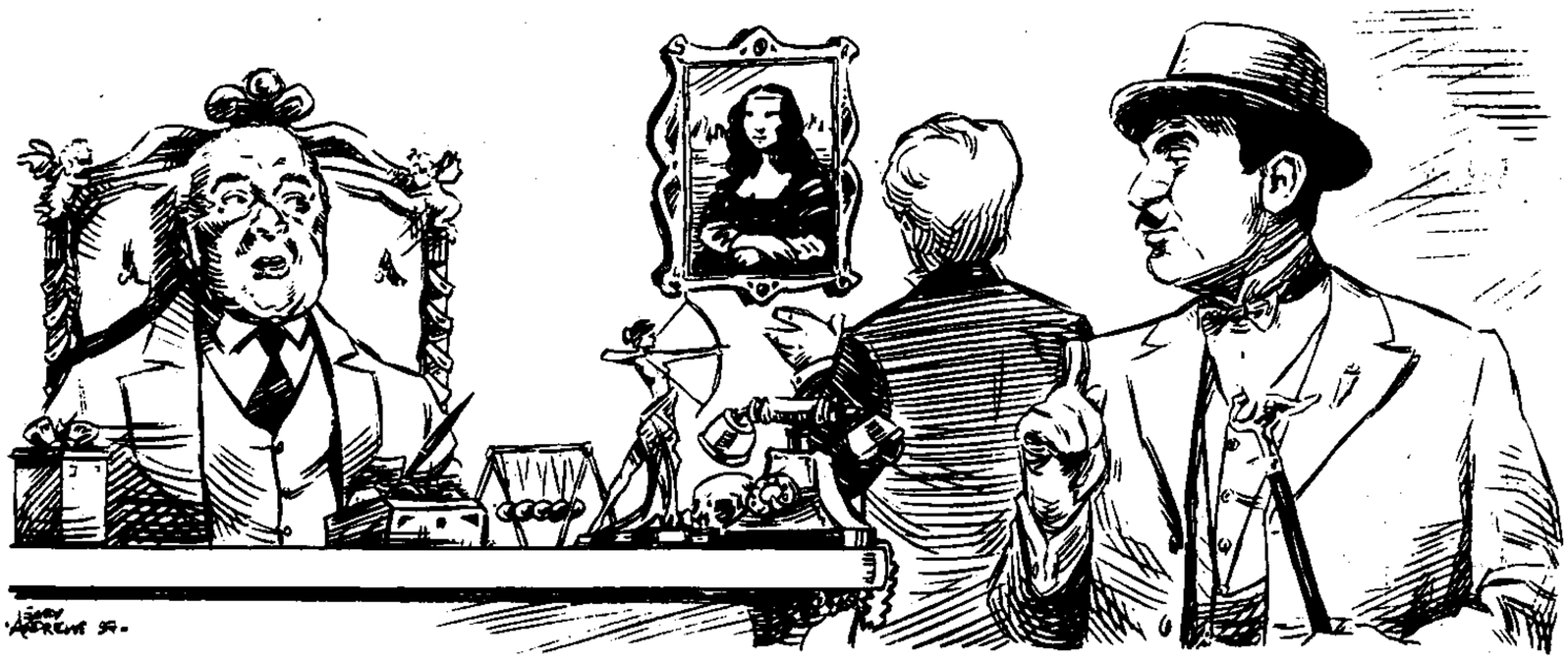
Cole beamed. "You are too kind. But now I am instructed to take you into the presence of Mr Al-Fayed himself..."

"YOU CALLIN' me a fuggin' thief? You Belgian fuggin' poof!" The swarthy Egyptian entrepreneur thumped his fist on the imitation Louis XIX Chippendale mahogany escritoire.

Poirot's eyes narrowed with disdain, as Mr Cole hastened to clarify his employer's position.

"I think that what Lord Fayed wishes to say is that he had no knowledge of the so-called 'Lonrho emeralds' which Mr Rowland alleges he placed in a Harrods deposit box."

"And yet," the great detective intervened, twirling his waxed moustaches, "I 'ave here a signed statement from one of your own security staff zat Mr Fayed 'imself broke into ze box with ze 'ammeur, wearing special white gloves, and removed ze priceless gemstones 'imself. Is zat not so, 'Astings?"



"Fuggin' liar!" screamed the portly billionaire, resorting under stress to the argot of his native Port Said.

"'Astings, ze affidavit, if you would be so good?" said Poirot, turning to his right-hand man.

Hastings reached into an inside pocket and produced an imposing legal document.

"Do I have to read it?" he asked menacingly, looking across the desk at the now visibly flustered store-owner.

Mr Al-Fayed flapped irritably at his Head of Public and Corporate Relations, gesturing towards an oil painting of the Mona Lisa on the wall behind him.

Poirot watched fascinated as the dapper functionary operated a hidden spring-mechanism, and the painting swung aside to reveal a metal safe.

"Look," said Cole, "Earl Fayed wants you to know that there must have been some sort of a misunderstanding. He would like you to accept this small token of his esteem, to show that there are no hard feelings."

As he spoke he was turning the dial of the safe, first one way, then the other, with practised dexterity.

"Fuggin' 'urry up," snapped the impatient entrepreneur.

At last the door swung open to reveal large piles of neatly stacked brown envelopes.

As Cole pulled out a handful of them, he added in obsequious tones, "My employer is of course entirely innocent of any charges, and he is delighted you have agreed that this is an end to the whole unfortunate affair".

"Just give them the fuggin' money," snarled the world's most famous shopkeeper.

But Poirot's observant eyes were no longer on the brown envelopes being proffered to him by the egregious lackey.

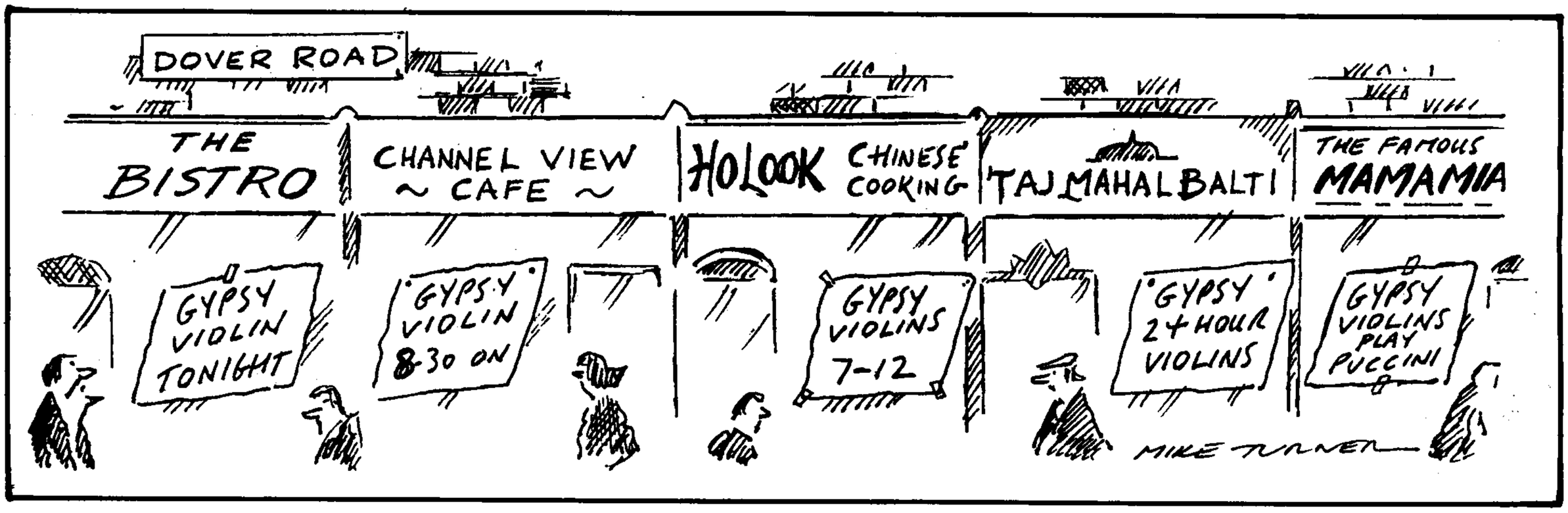
"Regard, mon ami!" he exclaimed to Hastings, pointing with his cane to the back of the safe.

There, twinkling in the darkness, like little green stars, were what looked remarkably like a set of enormous emeralds.

"You fuggin' idiot, Cole," barked Fayed. "You're fired."

"I zink our little case is solved," concluded Poirot with a smile. "I shall be in contact wiz my friends at Scotland Yard in ze morning."

NEXT WEEK: Poirot investigates the mystery of The Missing Last Words of Princess Diana.



THE INDEscribablyworsethanever

Price: Given away on trains

Friday 31 October 1997

'The last leaf of autumn falls painfully to earth'

BY WILL THISDO

It is 6.32pm in an ordinary suburban street. A dog barks. An old woman is shuffling along the pavement, bent under the weight of her shopping.

Overhead there is the rumble of a distant jet flying in from faraway Frankfurt or possibly Kuala Lumpur.

Oblivious of the scene below, Captain Collimore is informing passengers that ground temperature at Gatwick is "a pleasant 21 degrees Celsius" and that "local time is now 6.33pm".

A whole minute has passed. And it has taken all that time for a single leaf to fall from the branch of a London plane tree outside my offices.

It is a time of year for things to fall.

Leaves. Rain. The circulation of the Independent.

Has it got anything to do with the new-style front page? We shall never know.

'BLAIR TO END SPIN DOCTORING' REVEALS LEAK

by Our Mandelson in Whitehall **Jonathan Leake**

WESTMINSTER, Whitehall and the City were thrown into complete chaos last night by an official leak making it clear that there will be no more "leaking" of information by the Blair government.

A high-level source believed to be in the Treasury, although it might have been Number Ten, confirmed that the official leak was "genuine", and explained that there would be no more leaks from any spin doctors in the course of the current parliament.

Whelan and Dealin'

But this leak was "authoritatively denied" by an off-the-record briefing given to selected journalists by a very senior adviser in the Department of the Environment, or possibly the Home Office.

This top level source made clear that there was "no firm decision" to stop leaks in the course of the current parliament, but that the whole policy on spin-doctoring was to "wait and see" and to end leaking "only when the conditions and the timing are right, or not as the case may be".

Brown Source

But this newspaper has now learned from a very well-informed source indeed, inside the prime minister's private trousers *(surely 'office'? Ed.)*, that the vexed problem of spin-doctoring is to be referred to a committee, chaired by Mr Peter Mandelson, which will conduct a high-level review covering every aspect of the policy.

The decision to hold a review of the Government's policy on leaks will, we learn, be announced to the House of Commons "when the time and conditions are right".

The results of the review, according to someone I met in the bar at the House of Commons, will be leaked *(cont. p. 94)*

Oscar Wilde is given the full *Omnibus* treatment tonight as presenter Michael Bracewell attempts to get to the bottom of the celebrated playwright, gay hero and irrepressible wit.

Scotsman — Weekend Magazine

CHARLES PRAISES 'ALTERNATIVE MONARCHY'

by Our Medical Staff **Lunchtime O'Listic**

PRINCE Charles yesterday called for the acceptance of an "alternative monarchy", which he hoped would finally replace the more conventional form.

Speaking from his organic trousers at Highgrove, Gloucs, the Prince explained "I'm not knocking traditional monarchy. For a lot of people, the orthodox approach of a woman in a twin-set and crown looking miserable and going on television once a year does the trick".

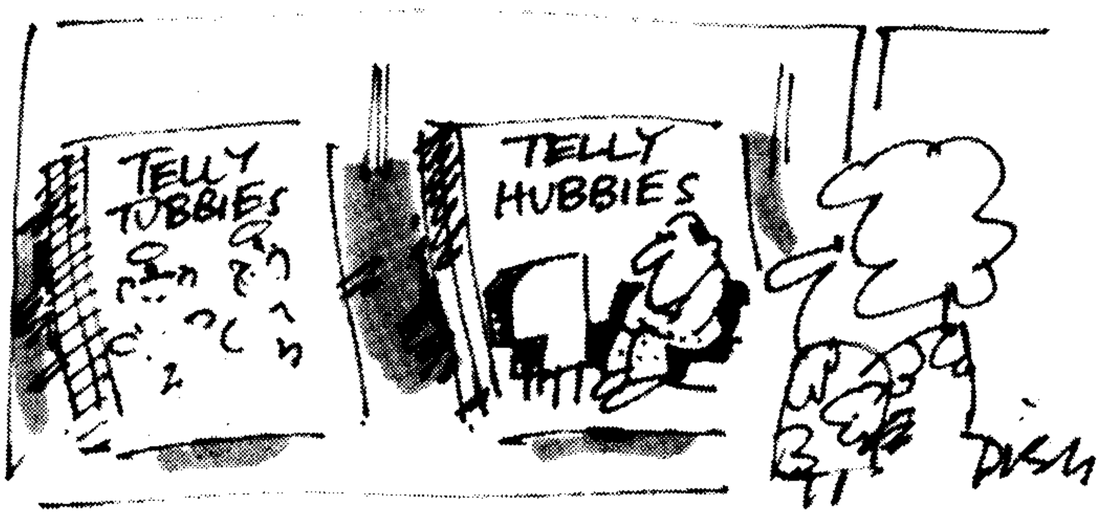
"It makes them feel better and there's nothing wrong with that."

"But nowadays more and more people are seeking an alternative form of monarchy."

"They want an organic, holistic, you know, homeopathic, aromatherapeutic, those needle thingies... wisdom of the east... wisdom of the yeast... a spoonful of sugar makes the live yoghurt go down... sort of monarchy, and I feel I can offer that."

When You Are Feeling Poorly, Which Approach Do You Favour?

Old-style Queen, or new-style Prince Charles? Call now on 01800-462462 or send messages telepathically *(entirely free)*.



DIARY

Chris: I tell you wot. Phew-WEEE! Okay, right! Yup! Let's get this sorted — sorted let's get this, okay! This is the world's most intelligent-io breakfast show, presented by *moi*, Mr Christopher Evans, coming to you LIVE through your tranny and all that stuff — woooh! But that's enough talk from me, let's see what the team have to say, okay team? I said, okay, team?

Little Man Helper: Hahahahaha! Great, Chris!

Little Woman Helper: Hahahahahaha! Reeely great!

Chris: That's more like it, ha ha! So let's talk about what we all got up to last night. What about you, little woman helper?

Little Woman Helper: Hahahahahaha! Reeely great!

Chris: How's your bazookas today, love? Bit sore after a mucho heavy bitty-bit of bouncy-bouncy last night, ha ha?!

Little Woman Helper: Hahahahahaha! Great Chris!

Chris: Not half as heavy as I got up to with an unnamed MEGASTAR whose name I am not prepared to divulge! By the way, did I ever tell you I once went out — and I'm talking DOING IT — with the famous Kim Wilde! Did it with her ooodles and nooodles of times! Blimey! I tell you wot, she didn't half turn it on, did our Kim! Should've seen her in the nuderisimmo! Talk about bazooming bazookas! Should've seen 'em, really should! But that's strictly private, strictly, strictly private, it was just something very private and personal and beautiful between me and the lovely Kim, and I think it would be quite wrong to reveal on air exactly where the lovely lady in question let me put my twelve-incher — wayhayhay, what about that, team!

Team: Hahahahahaha! Great, Chris! Hahahahaha! Reeely great!

Chris: Blimey, I tell you wot, the amount of beer I had last night down the pub with some good mates, and I didn't throw up once, not once, but then if I had I'd've just got someone to clear it up for me, cos I'm that rich, I really am, I could even pay someone to clear it up with their TONGUE!

Team: Hahahahaha!

Chris: And get it off tax! No, but I could, honest; honest, I could. I tell you wot, my contract with Branson, right, it's like worth millions and millions. Mega-millions, right? Anyway, the phones've been going

wild ever since we bin on from listeners saying I'm worth every friggin' penny of my millions and millions 'cos there's no one like me, Chris Evans, no one at all, and Branson should give me more if he wants to keep me, and there's a fax from Jeannie in Derbyshire offering to pay me five grand just to suck my —

Team: Hahahahahahaha!

Chris: Put it this way, this lady wants her tongue to go where Kim Wilde's and hundreds of others have gone before. Now's the time to unzip my bank balance and waggle it in the air, darling — it's the biggest you've ever seen! Hahahaha!

Team: Hahahahaha! Great Chris!

Chris: Coming up, in forty-five minutes we got a pop song for you, so you can nip out for your wee-wees then —

Team: Hahahahaha!

Chris: — but before that I tell you wot we got some fan-mega-tastic talk from me coming up, with amazing totally new things and stuff to learn about my own good self, Mister Christopherrrrrr Evans, like what brand of lager I was supping with me good mates down the boozer last night, and what I think the Chancellor of the Exchequeroomi, thingy, you know, come on, come on, like, yup, wosisname, then? —

Little Man Helper: Brown.

Chris: Tha's the one, Graham Brown, what I think the Chancellor should do about the Monetary Union, but first I wanna — Break That Wind!

Team: BREAK THAT WIND! Hahahaha!

Chris: Yes indeedy, it's that time of the morning — WooooHoooo! — when I personally "Break That Wind" out of my own B-T-M — that's short for arse! — down through the airwaves and out through the radios of all the ordinary little people like your own good selves at home or driving to work! That way, every single person in the whole world can boast to each other they've personally heard Chris Evans break wind LIVE on British radio that very morning! Yeserooni! So let's hear the chant, team!

Team: Break that Wind! Break that Wind! Break that Wind!

Chris: So heere goes. Stand back, everyone: PHWRWRWRWRWWRWPFLPFLPFLP FLP!

Team: Hurray! Great, Chris! Hahahahahaha!

Chris: Woooh! Tha's better! Like, I should be paid an extra two and a half grand, maybe three, for that! Not as easy as it looks to let rip live on air, y'know! Yup! Yeeh-hah! Okay, right! You know wot. So where were we? Thassit. Yup. Major question. Chancellor Graham Brown and what he should do about the European Monterarararary Union. Chuck it, Graham! Tha's my advice! Who wants bloody ECUs anyway? Not me, and tha's for sure! I got millions and millions of pounds anyway, all written into my contract! So stuff it! Tha's wot we say, innit, team?

Team: Yeah! Hurray! Great, Chris!

Little Woman Helper: You're so great with your opinions, Chris. You should be a world leader, right?

Chris: Did I ask you to speak? Did I? Well don't bloody speak 'less you're asked or you're out. Hahaha! Cheers! That's that sorted then. All right then. Yup. Like. Woooh! Love the stuff! Tell you wot, where were we, right, yeah, here's a question for everyone out there: if you had to have sex with a rodent, which rodent would it be? Mouse? Rat? Hamster? Budgie?

Little Man Helper: Er, Chris, a budgie's not a rodent, ha ha!

Chris: I don't need that from you. Out. Now. Piss off. Look, like I'm the star of this show, I'm the one with the contract, and if I say a budgie's a rodent then a budgie's a rodent, right? Let that be a lesson. Hahahaha! Great!

Team: Hahahahaha! Great, Chris! Great! Great! Great!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

The New Tory Song Book

(compiled by W. Hague)

1. Where Have All The Tories Gone?
2. We Were Overcome.
3. If You Were Ffion-ly Girl In The World.
4. Scandal In The Wind.
5. Gay Jude. *(That's enough New Tory songs. Ed.)*

Literary Review

The God of Large Cheques

by Arundhati Royalties

Winner of the 1997 Booker Prize

I SHALL start at the beginning. Or near the beginning. Perhaps a little after the beginning, then I'll go back to the real beginning, after which I can skip you forwards again to the notbeginning that I began with. I know — I'll start by spending a lot of time telling you where I'm going to begin. That's a good idea. I used to use this technique when I was twelve and found it hard to fill up a whole page of my exercise book. When I was twelve, I also met a sweet-seller who made me touch him in funny places. But that's another story.

So. The beginning. This is easy. I've done more than a hundred words already. Writing a novel isn't going to take me very long at all.

At the beginning a white man arrived on my doorstep in New Delhi. "I want to be your literary agent," he said. "I am the God of Large Cheques, and I would like to sell your novel all over the world."

"I haven't written a novel," I said.

"Oh, bollocks," he replied. "I've lost the bit of paper with the address on it. Someone round here has written a novel."

"Come in, maybe I can help," I replied, utterly implausibly, but knowing on instinct that this would be a clever way to lurch the plot forward seamlessly.

"What is that delicious smell?" he exclaimed, passing my threshold and bumping into Ammu, my obligatory bossy Indian mother.

"Ah, it's a pudding I'm baking," I replied.

"It smells extraordinary!"

"Well — it has a unique twist. I follow an ordinary recipe, but I ever-so-subtly multiply the number of eggs by ten."

"Genius!" he exclaimed, the words bursting from his mouth like an over-ripe mango exploding in the midday sun of the hottest Keralan summer since that awful year of the fateful election victory by the hateful communists who are more corrupt than an over-ripe mango exploding in the midday sun.

"Oh, it's only a small thing," I replied.

"Allow me to explain my problem," he uttered. "I need a novel set in India. Something completely fresh and original. Something that's never been done before. A kind of fifth rate imitation of *Midnight's Children*, but written by a photogenic woman and set in a slightly different part of the country."

"There must be a novel somewhere in the house that we can sell you," said Ammu. "I'll go upstairs and look for a manuscript."

"Novels don't just grow on trees, you know, Ammu," I said, sternly.

The white man gasped. "Your turn of phrase! It's so immaculate, fresh and interesting. Maybe you can do it! Maybe you can write the novel!"

"Not possible," I replied. "I have only a minimal command of English."

"That's perfect!" he blurted. "We can start now."

"But how shall I do it?"

"It's easy. The first thing to know is that you must forget all rules of readability and sentence structure, and use any trick of punctuation — anything at all — to make your sentences long; as long as you can — allowing them to run on indefinitely: they can even bleed into one another altogether so you have to go back and read the sentence again which everyone these days takes as a sign of good style. Then, when you're ready. You use short ones. For jokes. When there's something funny. Short sentences. For your jokes. For labouring jokes. Labouring them. The. Jokes."

"I'm not sure I understand."

"It's easy. Look — did you ever watch *Mind Your Language*? Use the Indian character in that as a basis. Keep everyone quaint and make them talk funny. It sells by the bucket load. And throw in a few wise old aunts. And a pickle factory. That's compulsory. Doesn't your mother work in a pickle factory?"

"No. She's a civil servant."

"What's wrong with you? Why doesn't your mother work in a pickle factory? India's a spicy, brightly-coloured country, so everyone works in pickle factories."

"She's a civil servant. She's always been a civil servant."

"And stop talking like that!"

"Like what?"

"Like that! With all your words separate. You're supposed to be Indian. Sotalk likethis. Join your wordsup. Don'tyouknow anything? Didn't you *ever* watch *Mind Your Language*?'

"I've never heard of it."

"And what's wrong with this room? It's so drab. Where are all your brightly-coloured drapes and funny ethnic statues?"

"What are you talking about? This is the nineties."

"Oh, it's tragic what's happened to the scenic countries of the world. You'll have to set your novel in the past. We need colour, ethnic nik-naks, and preferably a sweet-seller who interfered with you when you were a little girl. A bit of sexual abuse is compulsory if you want to be taken seriously."

"She'll do it" said Ammu, bursting into the room.

"But how did you hear our conversation? You were upstairs," I said.

"Oh stop being so fussy," said the God of Large Cheques. "You'll never get a novel finished if you waste your time worrying about stupid things like that."

"Get out of my house," shouted Ammu bossily, serving her usual function of finishing scenes with handy rapidity. "My daughter has a novel to write."

Bookworm at Cheltenham

■ DESPITE the extensive publicity tour undertaken by newly single Edwina Currie, sales of *She's Leaving Home* remain disappointing.

Her appearance at the Cheltenham Festival of Literature was intended as the Tuesday evening "show stopper", with audiences expected to fill the 1,000-seater main hall. In the event Ms Currie spoke to around 300. She was unaware, however, that a significant proportion of these were hapless members of the town council and their families who had been invited to a complimentary drinks party by

AMIS AGONISTES

"Sometimes I wish that time could run backwards — to the period in my career before I wrote 'Times Arrow' "

festival organisers — on condition they turned up beforehand to make up the numbers at the vastly undersold event.

□ *JENNY JOSEPH, author of "the nation's favourite poem",* When I am old I shall wear purple, *was rapturously received by an audience of Cheltenham ladies of a certain age.*

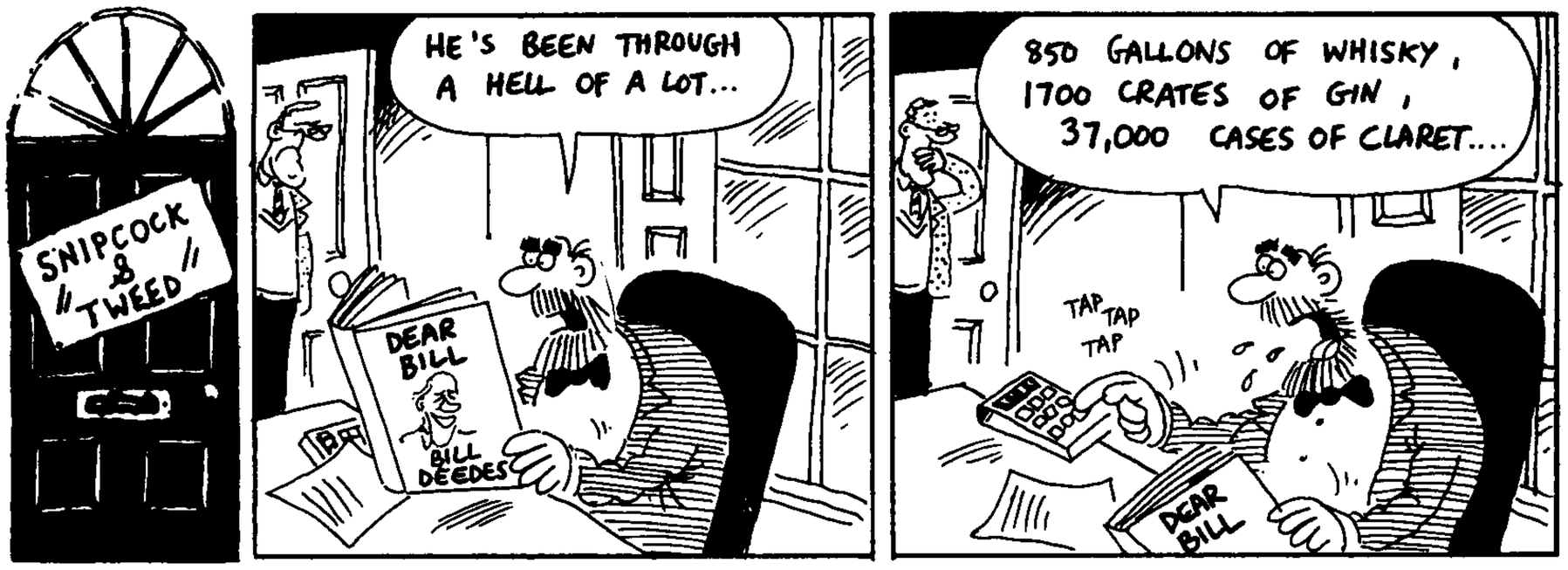
Almost every one of them awaited their leader bedecked in at least one garment of purple hue — but pronounced themselves somewhat disappointed when Ms Joseph turned up in a colour uncharitably described as "old lady beige".

■ **SALMAN RUSHDIE's unannounced visit to the festival for a panel discussion on Indian literature surprised many — not least the audience, which in anticipation of a "no-name" event only filled half the hall.**

The usual series of strict security arrangements applied but one detail was still overlooked: when members of the public were seen waving at Rushdie through the windows, it was suggested that closing the curtains in the writers' green room might be an idea...

□ THE HYPE surrounding Martin Amis' appearance at the festival verged on the Messianic, nay Blairite. In the brochure he was no less than the "most influential stylist of his generation", but by the time he made it to the stage he had been elevated to the level of "undoubtedly the best British writer of his time".

None of this, however, prevented the unsheathing of knives in the writers' room even before the ink on the autographed copies of *Night Train* was dry. "Trite" and "terrible" were two adjectives that were bandied around, while one author went so far as to suggest that Amis' latest work was "the most appalling piece of whimsy you have ever heard...as usual he fails completely to find the voice of any character other than himself". America, it seems, might be the best place for him.


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
HE'S BEEN THROUGH A HELL OF A LOT...
DEAR BILL
BILL DEEDES
850 GALLONS OF WHISKY, 1700 CRATES OF GIN, 37,000 CASES OF CLARET....
TAP TAP TAP
DEAR BILL

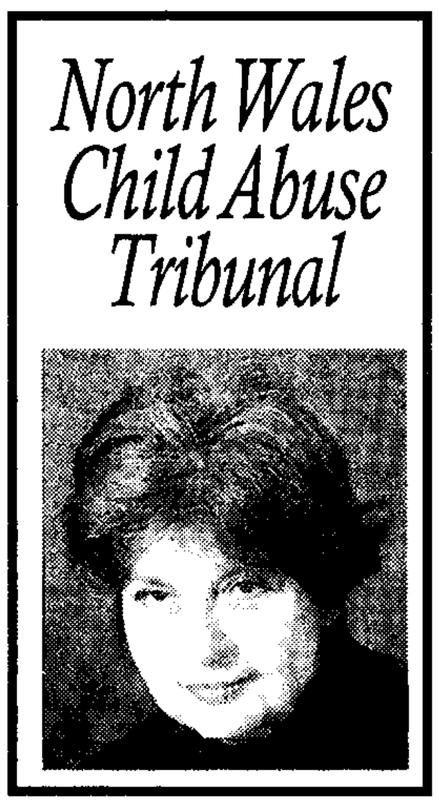
footnotes

MERFYN'S PIQUE

ALISON TAYLOR, the former head of a north Wales council home who tried so hard and for so long to alert the authorities to the horrors of child abuse in north Wales council homes, told the following amazing (and entirely unpublished) story to the Waterhouse inquiry on 10 October.

In 1986 a 16-year-old boy in care, X, was transferred to the home she was running near Bangor. While there, he made a series of complaints to north Wales police about shocking abuse against him by an influential person employed by Gwynedd county council (he can't be named because of the inquiry's rules). The person knew about the complaints.

After he was discharged from the home, X and a friend were arrested and charged with stealing goods worth about £100 from an empty house. The police planned to bail them into the care of a Gwynedd council home, and asked the council for the names of suitable homes to put them in. No such names were forthcoming. Instead, when the boys appeared in front of magistrates, the council announced that they had obtained an "Unruly Certificate". Such certificates are only granted in extreme circumstances of violent behaviour, which hardly seemed to fit this case. This application *was* granted, however, and the boys were locked up. They spent four months on remand at Risley, Lancs (known then as "grisly Risley") and were then sentenced to a year in prison. The 16-year-old thus spent nearly a year in prison — which Mrs Taylor argued was inappropriate and cruel. The innuendo of Mrs Taylor's story was that the boys had been "taught a lesson" for daring to allege child abuse.



Mr Merfyn Hughes QC, representing Gwynedd council, waxed incandescent at these allegations. Dramatically, he delivered what he imagined was his *coup de grace*.

Q: Let me just tell you what the result of our joint researches has been. There is no evidence of any written application for an unruly certificate on the files of either boy. Do you understand?

A: No evidence of any *written* application for an unruly certificate, you mean?

Q: Correct. No evidence either of any written reports which are to accompany the applications. Further, no reference on any document to the making of such certificates.

A: I mean surely the court reports of the hearing ought to show whether there were any certificates.

Q: We have not had access to court records.

Why not? The following Monday morning, when the hearings resumed, the barrister in charge of inquiry, Mr Ernest Ryder, announced: "May it please you, before Mrs Taylor resumes, may I tell the tribunal that inquiries were made at the magistrates court relating to the issue of whether unruly certificates were issued. It transpires that there is a court record available that shows that a certificate of unruliness was issued in the case of Boy X (though not for his friend who was over the age for such certificates)".

Mr Hughes was not in court that morning to savour this delicious moment of humiliation for him and his clients — nor to explain how an Unruly Certificate was obtained by Gwynedd apparently on verbal evidence without a single document recording the fact in the council files.

Cluny Tunes

O SIR WILLIAM

■ THE choice of retired judge Sir William Macpherson of Cluny to preside over the Stephen Lawrence inquiry has fascinated law students who study judicial review.

A text book on the subject, *Judicial Review in Perspective*, published in 1995, includes a chapter which compares the record of different judges in granting leave for judicial review. The "first point" noticed by the authors was "the wide variations in leave grant rates" between different judges. The "sheer scale of the variation", they wrote, "is surprising and worrying".

As an example, the authors publish a table on the reaction of 15 different and anonymous judges (named as A to O) to applications for judicial review on immigration matters in 1987 and 1988.

In 1987, Judge A was top of the list, granting 84 percent of the applications. Judge N was 14th with 18 per cent, and Judge O was bottom with 4. In 1988, Judge P strode into the lead with 77 per cent of applications granted. Judge F was 14th with 30, and Judge O came last again with 11.

The *Eye* understands that Judge O, now retired, can be found not a million miles from Newton Castle, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, the ancestral home of Sir William Macpherson of Cluny.

COUNTER PAIN 2

■ THE Post Office was due to send expensive lawyers to an industrial tribunal on 21 October to defend itself over the treatment of counter staff workers at the once-popular crown post office at Watford.

This office was "franchised" shortly before the election to howls of rage from all political parties and everyone else in the town. On 20 October, in the nick of time, the Post Office hastily offered a settlement to the workers far more generous than anything they could have got at the tribunal.

In doing so they ensured there was no public hearing. Which was just as well for the senior regional managers who for months had been wetting their pants at the prospect of giving evidence and answering questions about the consequences of the Post Office's headlong rush to "franchising", and the mysterious suspension of senior Post Office executives in recent weeks (see last *Eye*).

Meanwhile the *Eye* continues its survey of franchising by recalling what happened last year at Sidcup. Geoff Roberts and Martin Dobson were the lucky franchisees of the crown post office there. Roberts was so highly rated by the Post Office he was paid £96,000 to run the franchise.

So delighted were the two men at striking free from the shackles of state enterprise that they forgot to pay the rent. Confronted with a demand for the arrears, they plunged their hands into the till. By the time a Post Office audit team finally arrived, Dobson and Roberts had swiped £40,000 of the public's money and had ingeniously discovered ways to swipe much more. Roberts got 27 months, Dobson 18.

POST OFFICE

All for Group 4

■ THIS month's glowing report on Buckley Hall private prison near Rochdale, Lancs, was drafted by one Tony Wood, a senior government inspector of prisons.

BUCKLEY HALL PRISON: *Wood you credit it?*

Wood's report was greeted with great joy by the directors and shareholders of Group 4, the company that runs the prison.

The home office has now confirmed to the *Eye* that Wood has told the prison inspectorate he is to leave shortly. He has got a new top job — at Group 4.

A home office spokesman said the inspection of Buckley Hall was in February. Asked about a possible conflict of interest when the author of the draft report had agreed to join the company which runs the prison before the report was even published, the spokesman told the Eye: "Sir David Ramsbotham, chief inspector of prisons, took part in the inspection along with Tony Wood. Sir David would say to you that he has absolutely every confidence that Tony Wood's report reflected exactly what the inspection team found. It's not unreasonable that a prison company wants to employ people from the inspectorate who develop a wide range of experience beyond just, say, one prison."

High Principals

NOTHING UNTO WARD

■ THE mastermind behind the further education college principals who have featured in this column for so many months is Roger Ward, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, formerly the College Employers Forum.

Writing in the Education *Guardian* on 14 October, Mr Ward gave a generous plug to a new commercial agency: Education Lecturing Services, or ELS. Modestly, he declined to point out that ELS is the only agency supplying lecturers recommended to colleges by Mr Ward's association. Indeed, Mr Ward has always insisted that he and his organisations have been completely independent from ELS. But documents sent to the *Eye* suggest a different story.

The rapid rise of ELS, which now supplies 35,000 self-employed lecturers to colleges, corresponded closely with the rise in influence of Mr Ward's organisation. The proximity of the organisations, however, has been clear ever since ELS was founded in 1995.

ELS's financier was Bowmer and Kirkland, owned by the millionaire John Kirkland. Its chief executive was, and is, a former Derbyshire education director called Geoff Lennox. As early as May 1995 Ward was complaining to Lennox "that bills that are scheduled to be paid by ELS are long outstanding" — a matter which "has caused us a number of serious problems and personal embarrassment to me". Hotels were threatening legal action over these bills and a college, Derby Wilmorton, was also getting stroppy about the non-payment of a fee for a Rachel Newman who had been seconded to ELS. Ward insisted on a written assurance that the bills would be paid "today or tomorrow".

ROGER WARD: To ELS and back

This difficulty soon passed. The following month (June 1995) Roger Ward was writing personally to John Kirkland to report "a most enjoyable visit" to the new Nottingham office of ELS, which he described as "a first class showpiece". He added: "Everyone is working hard to make our enterprise a success." He wondered whether "Sheila and your goodself would be able to find time to join Amanda and I in London for dinner... perhaps drinks at our home in Hampstead and dinner at the Savoy — the choice is yours."

The Kirklands accepted the invitation, and the dinner was enjoyed in September. Mr Ward paid the bill, and warmly thanked the millionaire for his company. Once again, he wrote in September, he had visited the ELS office and discussed the current situation with the senior management team. He gave Kirkland this assurance: "We will continue to promote ELS in a recruitment campaign which I can co-ordinate with Geoff and the team. I see no reason why we should not be able to have 200 colleges in membership by September of next year. By this time the product will be refined and will have become widely accepted across the sector. The other role CEF will continue to play is to monitor and regulate any market competition. In reality these companies that have approached CEF would not, in any circumstances, have had our support as they clearly have not understood the market in which we operate."

One such company was Cheshire-based Nord Anglia PLC, which supplies qualified education staff. Nord Anglia's chairman Kevin McNeany travelled to London on 1 September 1995 to discuss with Ward the possibility of his organisation also being recommended to colleges. McNeany recalls that he was asked "to give a carte blanche undertaking to indemnify colleges in respect of any equal opportunities actions that might be brought against them — an undertaking he thought no organisation in its right mind could give. Ward told him, he says, that without such an undertaking, Nord Anglia could not be recommended. McNeany recalls that he was offered champagne, which he refused, and that there was a woman present throughout the conversation. He later discovered to his surprise that the woman was Maureen Thomas of ELS.

By contrast, the good relations between Ward and ELS continued to prosper. In the same month (September 1995) Ward wrote to Tim Parkes of ELS suggesting a "bulletin in the current state of affairs regarding temporary teaching staff" and asking for "a few bullet points so that we can keep the interest going". On 10 October, he wrote again, this time to chief executive Lennox, suggesting that "sometime in the future we might examine taking ELS to the USA" and naming possible contacts there. Three days later, he wrote again to Lennox asking "whether or not we ought to set up a division of the company, or indeed a separate company, to market a clerical staffs agency to colleges". He wondered "whether or not we should attempt some marketing exercise across the sector in this area" and asked "may we not be better off approaching an existing agency with a view to merging or buying them out?"

Another idea was "expanding ELS's range of services to higher education". Ward recommended Richard Dunn of City University as a "leader" in the universities personnel group, and suggested "inviting him to meet you in Nottingham". In October 1995, he wrote to BT about the education Superhighway. "One private sector company," he wrote, "has already begun to put together the foundations of a Superhighway" — ELS.

Throughout the academic year 1995-96, the co-operation between the two organisations flourished. Ward advised college principals to replace the old "silver book" lecturers' contracts with new contracts requiring much more work for less pay and less holidays. He recommended sacking full-time contracted lecturers and replacing them with self-employed lecturers — from ELS. He was backed to the hilt by the department of education and the quango it funds with taxpayers' money, the Further Education Funding Council.

As ELS grew to a turnover last year of £8m, and became profitable, so it attracted the City. In July 1996, three directors, Lennox, Parkes and Fielding, staged a management buy-out. They were assisted by a £500,000 investment from Elderstreet Investments, a venture capital company which manages funds for Kleinwort Benson, and a German bank. David Taylor of Elderstreet joined the ELS board. The grand union-busting operation in the colleges, promoted so assiduously by Roger Ward, had become big business. In November 1996, ELS organised a weekend conference "with an international audience" in Boston, USA. A prominent speaker, flown out and back at the expense of ELS, was Roger Ward.

Mr Ward tells the *Eye:* "There is no commercial relationship between the staff of CEF or AOC and any of the staffing agencies operating in our sector".

MALONE: Against

Mugsy Malone

■ AS PART of his campaign to win back Winchester for the Tories, Gerry Malone, former health minister, has denounced the much-canvassed concept of a new town at Micheldever, Hants.

"Only the Tories," he says, "oppose the project." (This is nonsense. Liberal Democrats were against the Micheldever monster long before Malone was parachuted into Winchester from Aberdeen, where he lost his seat). Malone cites a press release from the Tory Group on Hampshire county council on 30 September as follows: "To develop Micheldever would lead to the destruction of the centre of the beautiful county of Hampshire."

Whoops! On the very same 30 September, Christopher Chope, the Thatcherite former leader of Wandsworth council who scraped in on 1 May in the once safe Tory seat of Christchurch and is now the Tories frontbench housing spokesman, was speaking at a House Builders Federation meeting at Weston-super-Mare. His theme, according to *Planning* magazine on 3 October, was that "the pendulum has swung too far in favour of building new houses in already built-up areas". Instead he advocated the building of new towns and villages in the countryside. He had an excellent example of what he meant. "The plan-led system," he said, "is an opportunity to grasp the nettle of new settlements such as the Micheldever station new country town project in Hampshire."

CHOPE: For

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

AFTER seven months of preparation/prevarication, the Department of Timidity & Inaction is finally poised to make its move to extradite Roger Levitt from the land of the (so far) free. Unless there is a last minute reversal, news is expected momentarily, as they say in Roger the Dodger's now New York home, of his arrest kicking off the extradition proceedings if he refuses to return voluntarily.

A warrant for Levitt's arrest was issued in March accusing him of misleading DTI inspectors investigating his role at the shortlived International Boxing Corporation. Levitt is accused of providing false information contrary to section 451 of the companies act.

The DTI launched its investigation after receiving information that Levitt was running IBC despite a seven-year disqualification order banning him from company management. This was imposed in 1993 along with his risible 180 hours community service "sentence" for fraudulent trading following the collapse of his Levitt Group financial services outfit.

Initially Levitt was charged with being a "shadow director" of IBC, of which he was effectively the controlling shareholder, between 1993 and 1995. It appears that IBC was largely funded through nominees by the Levitt pension fund which, unlike those of his clients, miraculously survived the Levitt Group crash. However, once again the DTI had not done its legal homework. That particular offence under the company director's disqualification act was not extraditable from the United States where "Dodger" had moved in mid-1996.

A rethink produced the section 451 charge which the DTI legal beagles seem confident will pass the extradition test in New York where Levitt has resumed his boxing promoter role as president of Boxing International. Since March the DTI seems to have been hoping that Levitt would save them the risk by volunteering to return, the bait being that once arrested he will be held in custody pending a decision by the federal courts — and US prisons are not Ford. Fellow fugitives Anthony Parnes and Terry Ramsden eventually agreed to come back and be on bail here rather than continue doing federal time. So far this argument has failed to persuade. So the legal battle looks set to begin.

Levitt is expected to claim the DTI case is badly flawed. Serious legal mistakes have already been exposed in the handling of the IBC investigation. Levitt will probably also claim that IBC was not a company but a partnership, largely between him and his long time associate Conrad Morris, and therefore not covered by the disqualification order which only refers to directors. All that before the issue of whatever evidence he volunteered to the DTI inspectors who appear to have made a number of procedural bungles which could yet provide the Dodger with his get-out-of-jail card.

IF THE tragic events in Paris had not intervened Dodi Fayed would have found himself involved in one of the Serious Farce Office's already most sensitive prosecutions.

SFO investigators were preparing to interview the son of the not so fabulous Fulham pharaoh over his dealings with Mayfair solicitor Michael Palmer who currently faces fraud charges. Palmer's co-defendant is his former client, Iranian Jamshid Hashemi — a former arms dealer and MI6/CIA asset.

The Fayed connection relates to Palmer's role as a co-director with "Dodo" of the Allied Stars film production company where the Hollywood playboy earned the nickname "Hoover" because of his fondness for Colombia's greatest export.

"Hoover" and Palmer became directors in April 1993 shortly before control of the company switched from Mohamed Fayed and his brothers to a Liberian company, Allied Stars SA. "Hoover", like Hashemi, was a client of Palmer's firm Palmer Cowan. It was about his dealings, both legal and financial, with Palmer that the SFO wanted to interview "Dodo".

Given that MI6 was already expressing growing nervousness over what might emerge at a Hashemi trial factoring in the Princess of Wales would have caused further concerns. Sadly attorney general John Morris and solicitor general Lord Falconer now only have the spooks to worry about.

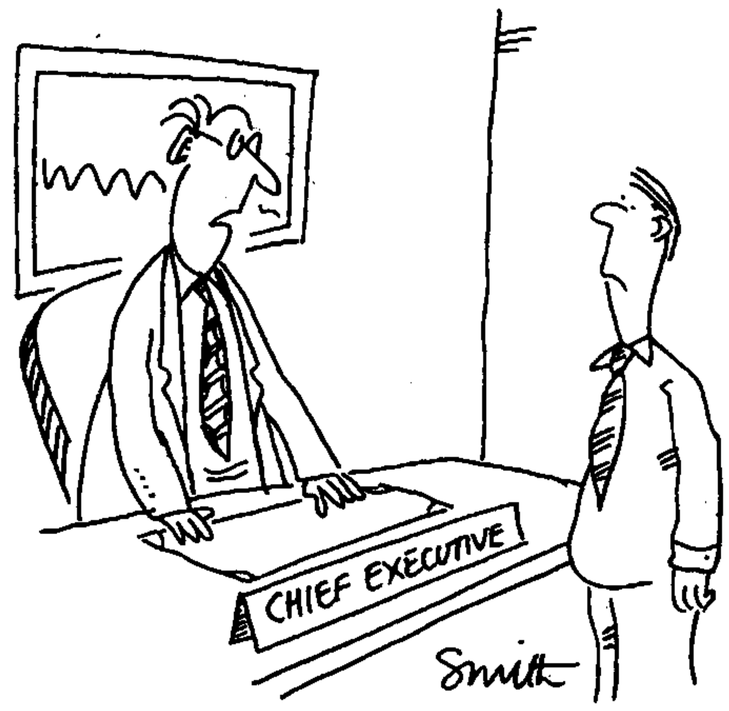
PALMER's arrest has also caused problems for another royal, the financially challenged Prince Michael of Kent.

Palmer was his personal lawyer and closely involved in the prince's many "Rent-a-Kent" schemes with HRH's former business managers, John Kennedy and Giles Remnant. The former threatened to sue, and the latter has now sued for money due. Palmer has now exited Palmer Cowan leaving to other partners the joy of representing Prince Michael and Princess "Pushy".

Nor is that the end of the Kents' embarrassment. Their friend and host, Lebanese-born Brazilian businessman Naji Nahas, was sentenced earlier this month to almost 25 years imprisonment in absentia for his role in the share manipulation scandal that closed the Brazil stock market in 1989. The Rio court was told Nahas' whereabouts were unknown. The judge said he could only appeal if he surrendered and must do at least eight years before being eligible for parole.

Nahas was the biggest player on the Brazilian stock market in 1989. His scam was to buy options in the futures market then use bank loans to buy and sell the same shares between his associates on the stock market thereby driving up the prices. The options were then sold at a profit leaving the bank loans to fund the higher prices paid for the shares. But all this relied on endless credit from the banks. Tipped off, the banks closed the cheque book. A Nahas cheque for $31m bounced and six brokers closed. Losses totalled $500m.

Looks like there will be little hope of the man from Brazil riding to the Kents' rescue.



"You need motivating, Frobisher. How do you feel about me getting a £200,000 pay rise?"

PETER ABBEY was one of those who helped give the Alternative Investment Market a bad name. He was involved with a number of dubious flotations including the notorious Firecrest which went down in flames last year burning a big hole in the already tarnished AIM reputation.

Abbey remained in the shadows because of his less than glittering career at Home Video, from which he resigned in the early 80s, and the City company he keeps — such as former Harvard Securities penny stock promoter and persona non grata Tom Wilmot.

Now Abbey seems to be experiencing a little local difficulty at Zebra Group, a shell company in which he was a large shareholder and consultant but of course not a director. Zebra is the former RMT Group which was forced into an arrangement with its creditors in 1992. Abbey moved in two years later promising deals and a revived stock market listing. On this basis shares were placed and former Ferranti chairman Sir Derek Alun-Jones and ex-Close Brothers banker Nicholas Stevenson joined the board. Both have since gone. No deals emerged and neither did a listing on AIM or its predecessor.

Now Zebra shareholders have been told the company has made a £99,000 loss almost entirely due to a bad debt from Abbey's Abercorn Investments. Abercorn owes Zebra £87,000 and has ceased trading. The debt is made up from an acknowledged debt of £55,000 plus other unpaid invoices and £25,000 in AIM listed, Zebra-owned shares which are missing! Zebra was said to have been seeking to distance itself from Abbey way back in 1995. Clearly it did not act soon enough.

'Slicker'

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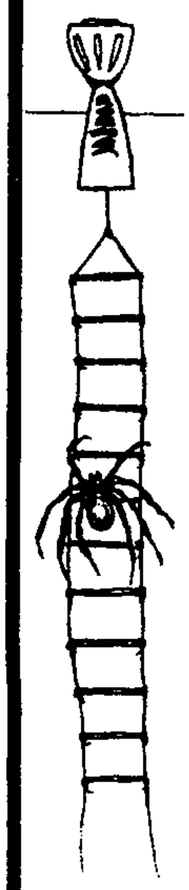

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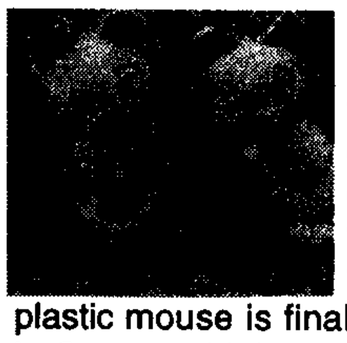

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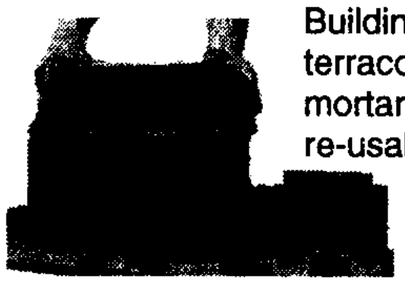

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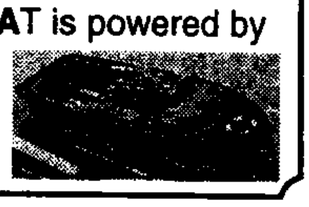

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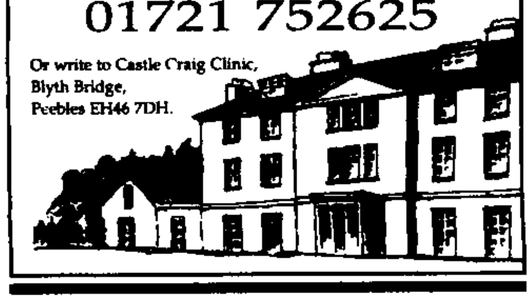

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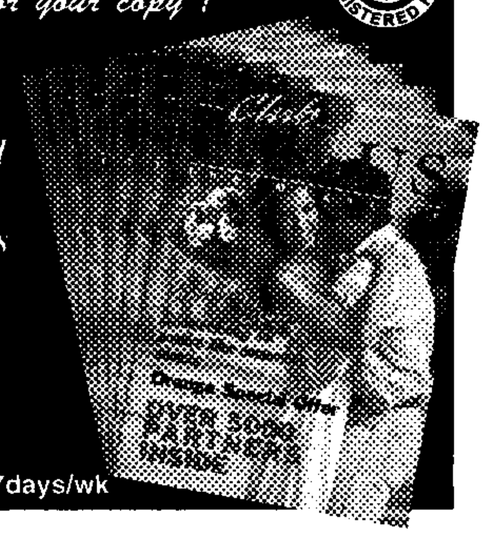

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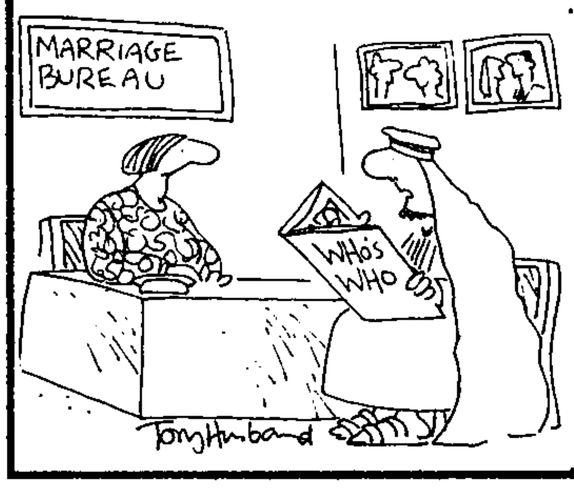

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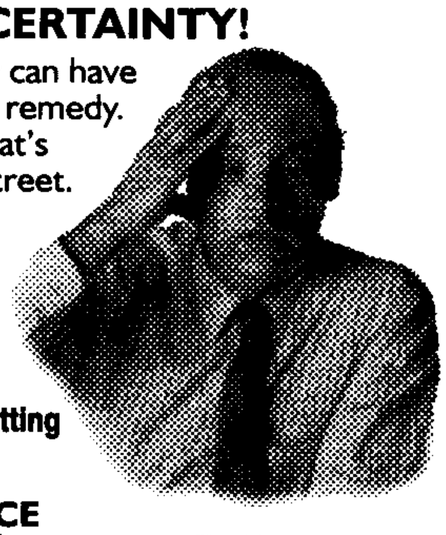

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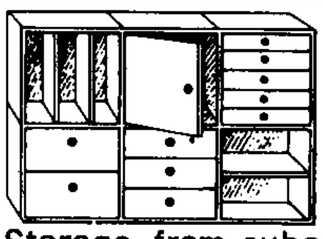

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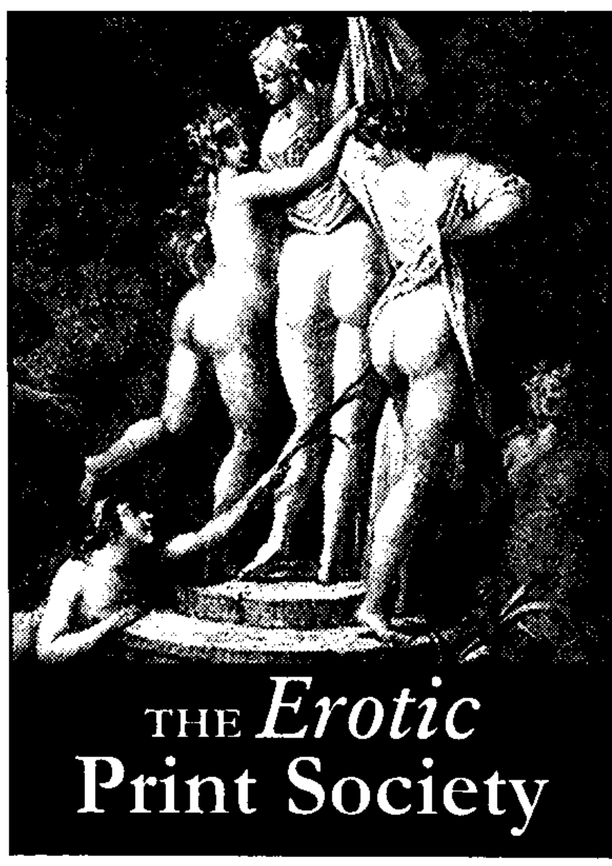

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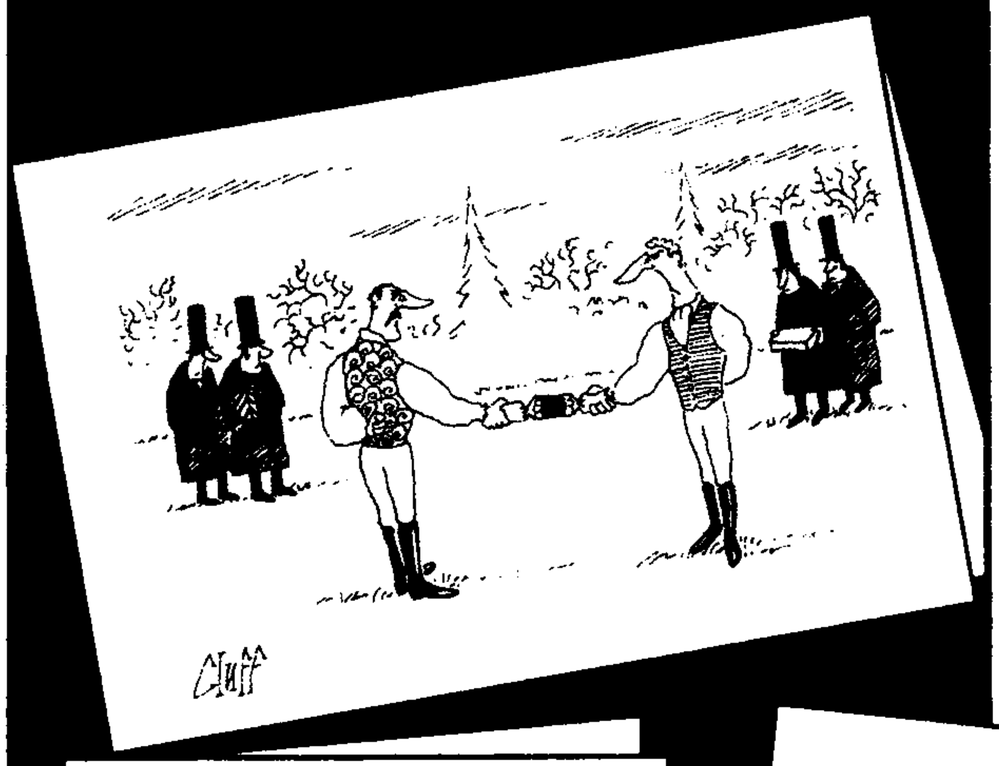

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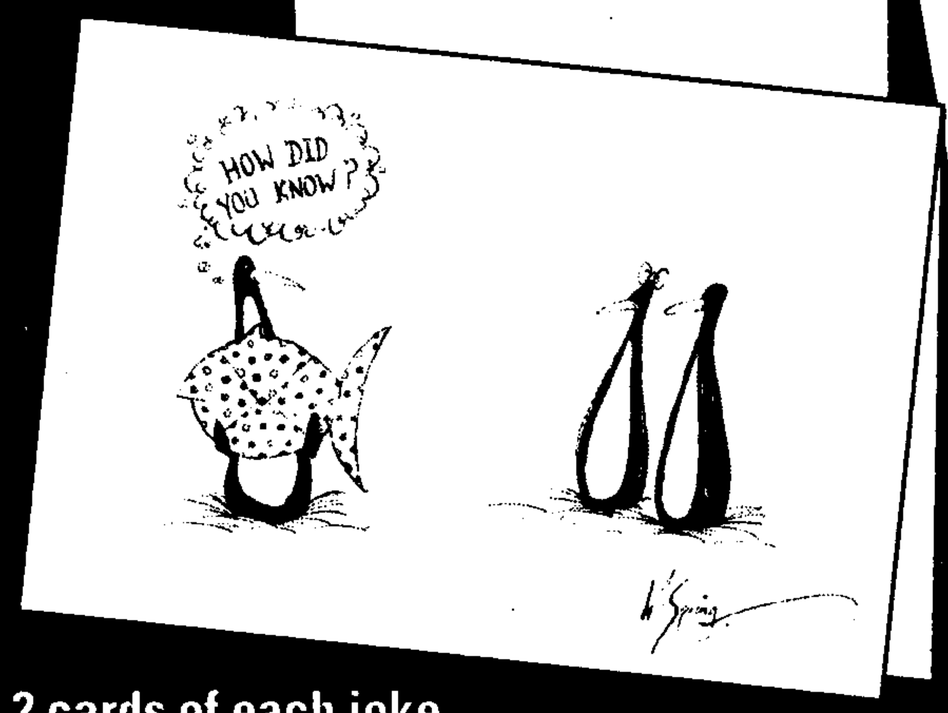

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